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THE CAVE WOMAN

NORVAL RICHARDSON

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THE CAVE WOMAN

PAGAN FIRE

THE WORLD SHUT OUT

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

THE CAVE WOMAN

THE CAVE WOMAN

BY

NORVAL RICHARDSON

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THE CAVE WOMAN

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THE CAVE WOMAN

CHAPTER I

HOGARTH'S first impression of her, received before he had even seen her and due to the assured, commanding tone of her voice, created in him an immediate sensation of dislike. A few minutes later, when he had turned and noticed the voluminous fur mantle—rather ridiculous for the balmy day, two toy dogs held in leash by an attendant maid, and a pile of capacious, gleaming bags, his first impression deepened. Here was another one of those indecently—yes, indecently was the precise word to describe what he felt—rich Americans who were flocking to the place and ruining it for more simple people. He was perfectly sure that she belonged to the class that came, looked the place over, bought a villa, caused prices to soar and, once having accomplished what he termed their baleful mission, closed the villa, sailed away to create no doubt the same disturbing influence somewhere else. The world seemed to be running over with just such people. They were like a Biblical pest.

He frowned; then smiled at what he admitted to himself was resentment. It was clearly that and the cause so simple—the resentment that was born

of envy. But then—he tried to palliate his attitude—it was immensely uncomfortable to have these people with their fabulous quantities of gold swooping down on the beautiful little island he had chosen for his home and robbing it of all its delightful simplicity.

A penetrating fragrance was wafted to him across the pile of gleaming luggage. His smile deepened. Yes, that strong scent was so characteristic too of all this traveler represented. Of course she would use one of those perfumes got up in Paris for the purpose, apparently, of wafting an intense odor across the world.

Finally Hogarth looked at her quite deliberately. He wanted to be sure that his first impressions had not miscarried. Inspection made his surmise ridiculously convincing. Beneath the fur coat her pose gave what he felt sure was the key to her character. She stood very firmly on her feet, very straight, upright, self-confident, strong with the assurance of resplendent health—and tremendously dominating. Merely her pose said plainly enough that she knew what she wanted, demanded—and got. Her face, under a heavy veil, was turned towards Naples, now unfolding in wide vistas as the boat sailed out into the bay. She appeared interested in the scene, though she expressed no comment. The woman beside her, so amusingly true to the type of paid companion—English, Hogarth thought—had already used every adjective in her limited vocabulary.

"Are you disappointed?" the companion asked.

The lady hesitated a few moments, at least she took her time over answering. "No. It's pretty

enough. Anyhow, it doesn't look half so dirty from here."

Again Hogarth smiled. Of course she would have found Naples dirty; that would have impressed her more than anything else; it was perfectly in character.

Turning so as to see better some point of interest which the companion had pointed out, Hogarth came into her vision. Her eyes dwelt on him with a sort of indifferent interest, as though he were merely a part of the view; then her attention appeared to become concentrated on him; what was at first a glance slowly developed into a frank stare.

Under her steady inspection his resentment flared up again. It was exactly like royalty of a past century staring at the populace. The simile rested in his thoughts. Was that not exactly what she was—royalty of to-day—royalty created by riches! She evidently commanded every bit as much as a medieval queen; only, instead of ministers and courtiers to carry out her orders, she merely used shekels. The simile might be carried farther, for what were lawyers and paid companions and maids but another name for more ancient functionaries! The result was surely the same with the advantage no doubt all in favor of the more modern method.

Hogarth returned her glance steadily though, as a matter of fact, he was beginning to find it somewhat disconcerting. She, however, was entirely unconscious of there being anything personal in it; at least, she gave this impression. He was sure she had never been told that staring was not considered good manners.

Finally she put a question to the companion, received a nodded response, and came straight across the deck to Hogarth.

"Aren't you American?"

He rose and took off his hat, a bit overwhelmed by her direct attack. As he faced her it was necessary to raise his head the least bit in order to meet her eyes.

"Yes—I am."

"I thought so. Do you know Capri?"

"I live there."

"That's lucky."

"Living there? You know it?"

"No—not that. I mean that I've found somebody who can tell me about it—somebody who has lived there."

Hogarth waited for her to continue. She had lifted her veil now and was looking at him out of very steady, curiously brilliant eyes. They were almost disconcertingly brilliant; large, wide apart, somehow rather star like and strikingly handsome. They lifted the rest of her face, rather heavy and far from finely molded, out of the commonplace; they even made it almost distinguished. On the whole, viewed by one who was not interested in subtleties, she would have been called an undeniably handsome woman. Her skin was extremely fine, fresh and clear, with high color; her teeth were magnificent; her hair, bright brown, with hints of red in it, was a mass of natural undulations; and her long, firm neck, which lifted her head above those of most people, accentuated what Hogarth had first felt as a commanding personality. His simile of royalty returned to him.

She really had considerable presence. Nor was her voice as displeasing as he had at first thought it. If the dominating note were modulated it would be a rich, colorful, passionate sort of voice—even rather noble. Altogether, as he faced her, the feeling came to him that here was a woman who would make her mark in the world—by sheer force of demanding if nothing else—one who would surely be considered by the majority as superb.

"Have you been in Capri long?" She pronounced "been" in the English fashion, even accentuating it as though it had just been learned. Hogarth had already noticed other attempts to English her pronunciations—due, no doubt, to the coaching of her English companion.

"Eight years."

"Eight years! Good heavens! You like it that much?"

"I love it."

"What is there to do?"

"Enjoy life." He smiled, an expression that lighted up his lean, finely chiseled, darkly handsome face charmingly. In a flash it changed his somewhat haughty, aloof personality into very winning warmth. Even his interrogator appeared to feel this change in him and while smiling in return looked more intently into his eyes.

"Enjoy life," she repeated after him. "Is that enough?"

"Isn't that what everyone is trying to do?"

"I suppose so. But I can't see myself living there without something to do—without some sort of a hobby."

"Yes—one should have a hobby, as you put it. Most of us have one—through necessity."

"Have you?"

Again Hogarth felt her steady eyes staring straight into his. Her frankness, her direct questions, her evident ignorance—or was it contempt?—for the amazingly personal note in the conversation which she hurled at him struck him as ridiculously child-like. Perhaps she was only a child—in mental development. Untold riches might keep one that way.

His delightful smile bridged a short silence. "Yes—I have an interest."

"I suppose you paint. You look the way I imagine artists look."

This time he laughed. In a way, she was the most extraordinary woman, and the most amusing, he had ever met. "Why do you say that?"

"Oh, I don't know—you just have that sort of indifferent, careless air. Are you an artist?"

"I hope to be some day. Sometimes it seems a long way off."

"Why? Aren't you painting now?"

He was on the point of breaking out into uncontrollable laughter but caught an angry flash in her eyes and stopped. "I don't paint," he hurried to reply. "I only write."

"Oh—so you're an author. I see."

The words were spoken in an uncompromising tone. They expressed neither surprise nor approval; they actually expressed nothing—a fact which left Hogarth intrigued. He found himself wondering if she were the type which disapproved of authors *en bloc,* thought them bad form, "Bohemian," socially

negligible. He had met several such people; they were usually flagrantly rich, as this woman undoubtedly was.

After a slight pause she again took up the conversation—if such a continuous series of questions could be called conversation—in the direction from which his smile had diverted her.

"Will it be easy to find a villa in Capri?"

"There are several to be let."

"I don't want to rent. I want to buy." This was put a bit imperiously.

"The one I rent is for sale."

Her starry eyes swept him with an appraising glance. His fairly shabby clothes, his crumpled hat, his dusty boots and more than anything else, a pasteboard box tied with a string, which lay on the bench beside him, underwent her scrutiny. In the end her expression told him quite plainly that she did not think that a house he was able to rent would meet with her requirements.

He flushed slightly under such obvious conclusions. "It's not so bad as you think. Wonders could be done with it—if one knew how."

"If one knew how!"

"So few people have taste in doing up an old house. They rarely know how to retain character when introducing modern comforts—especially Americans." He tried not to say it, but went down before the temptation to try a thrust.

Her head went up. "Didn't you say you were American?"

"That's why I know."

"I don't agree with you. But, of course—I'm not expatriated."

He hardly considered the challenge worth accepting. "If you buy a villa here——"

"I'll only spend a few months in it. Nothing would tie me long away from the United States. It's the greatest country in the world."

"I heartily agree with you."

"Yet you live here."

"I have a very good reason for doing that. America is too expensive."

They had been standing all this time, she facing him with her eyes shifting now and then to the view but always coming directly back to his face when she put her questions. With his last words she sat down on the bench, leaned back against the rail and crossed her legs with a gesture that had a certain definite suggestion of continuing the conversation for the rest of the voyage. Hogarth followed her motion and pulled the package a little towards him out of her way. He felt fairly certain that she would eventually ask him what was in it. The companion, maid and dogs remained at the other side of the boat—probably enjoying a moment of freedom, he thought, though within immediate call.

"Of course, if I like Capri, I'll want the biggest villa there."

Hogarth nodded. He would have liked to tell her that such information was entirely unnecessary. However he settled back silently and much more comfortably. It was not necessary for him to look up at her now to meet her eyes; their faces were about level. And the possibility, even probability,

of her questions becoming more and more intimate made the prospect of a long talk with her rather exhilarating.

"The architect that built my house in Santa Barbara told me California was very much like Italy with everything interesting left out. I've come over here to see."

"What California lacks? I think I know what your architect meant."

"What?"

Hogarth half closed his eyes and looked towards the Sorrento peninsula. In the brilliant afternoon light it was gleaming like a mass of precious stones. The bare, rocky promontory was seizing and holding in its recesses all the varying colors of the atmosphere. Violet, rose, vivid orange clashed and blended in the irregularities of the mountain range. Castellamare and the chain of little towns along the shore shone like fairy settlements in a world of unreal beauty.

"Perhaps he meant charm—the charm that all old countries possess. They are so suggestive—of romance, adventure, passionate struggles. One would hardly find that in California—unless one is willing to accept gold seekers in that light. Still—everyone doesn't find charm here. Some people hate it. Perhaps you will." He glanced at her to see how she would accept this, but glanced away quickly. Her disconcerting, starry eyes, were staring straight into his. "Look at those little towns we are approaching," he hurried on. "From here they are gleaming jewels; aren't they? But if you were to inspect them with a coldly unsympathetic eye, you'd find them

very dirty and uncomfortable and not actually pretty at all. One has to fill up, cover over and imagine a great deal to retain the impression received from this distance." His glance fell to the water, deep azure now, and weirdly broken by the reflection of the shore line. "I always feel that it is a crime for people to come to Italy unprepared."

"What do you mean by unprepared?"

"I mean—without first having steeped themselves in what Italy represents. Everything you see here has a story, a message, a voice. If you don't happen to know it, it means nothing to you."

"I can't say I know much about Italy."

"Then don't buy a villa here—I beg of you."

Hogarth was amazed at the new expression that flashed suddenly into her eyes; it was more like violence than anything he could think of and yet there was something dull about it too; it robbed her eyes of their brilliance and made them almost coldly cruel.

"Perhaps imagination would help me some," she said, evidently resenting his words.

"Imagination is most useful, but it doesn't necessarily put you in touch with the people and events that have made Italy—if you happen to know nothing about them. Ulysses, Circe, the Sirens, Tiberius—thousands of spirits still hover about Capri. They are an integral part of its charm. Indeed, without them, it would be very much like a well done stage setting. One must learn to listen for the voices of the place. They will tell you so much—they will tell you almost everything you ever need know."

She listened intently as Hogarth, warming to the subject, talked on in a voice that was full of a de-

lightfully soothing, gentle quality. It was one of his greatest charms. Next to his voice and his warmly intellectual eyes, it was the trait which drew people to him, irrespective of sex; for men found in his voice courage and determination and power; women found much more, for its gentle, low quality represented to them, in some subtle way, infinite caresses. And under its spell his listener's expression grew more and more bewildered. Her starry eyes became quietly troubled. They seemed to say that she was vastly puzzled by what she was hearing. Was he talking seriously? The slightly upturned corners of her mouth said no. Humorously? The strict attention she gave his words also said no. But to him these varying expressions did not exist. He had forgotten her presence in the interest of his voiced thoughts.

Before he was aware of it, the boat was making the first stop. Without a word of explanation or excuse, the lady rose, crossed to the other side of the boat, joined her companion and leaned over the rail to watch the shore boats come out to the steamer.

Hogarth remained where she had left him, his eyes full of amusement. Evidently his little expedition into the romance of Italy had scared her off. A wise discovery on his part—for he knew now, if he ever saw her again and found her avalanche of questions too overpowering, how to get rid of her. But he had found her interesting as a study. He had never seen anyone quite like her before. He had heard and read of such types; and had always dismissed the descriptions as exaggerated. But here

she was in resplendent flesh and riches. In spite of her lack of anything subtle, mysterious, hidden, held back—all the things which Hogarth believed a woman should possess to be fascinating—he felt himself rather attracted by her. She interested him intensely. He wondered if it were not due solely to what might be called primitive qualities, primitive animal magnetism, primitive forces which had never felt the weight of chains. There was no doubt in his mind that she was the most untouched by civilization—his more precise meaning of civilization in this case being conventions—woman he had ever encountered. Her manner of approaching him, finding out all he knew—at least all that would serve her purposes—listening to him and finally leaving him with the obvious impression that she had found him an unutterable bore:—all these actions were undoubtedly free of conventional inhibitions. If one were inclined to be sensitive, her actions might have been called insulting. She certainly showed no hesitancy in appropriating everyone and everything to her own purposes; and she had made no effort to hide this from him; he too would be used—had been—as it suited her best.

Hogarth's imagination was fired. He found himself thinking all sorts of things about her. He couldn't see her consulting or considering anyone else's wishes. Her own desires were the law of the Medes and Persians. No doubt this was the result of experience. He doubted very much that she had ever failed to get anything she had wanted. Failure, rebuffs, disappointment, thwarted desires did not

show in her face. But could it be possible for any human being to have reached her age—she looked about thirty—without some desires being withheld! Perhaps it was just that which had caught his attention and held it. He would like to know if such a thing were possible. He must know. It would be like discovering something the world had been ignorant of for centuries. In a word, she might prove "copy," only, as had also been his first thought of her, a reader would say that no such person existed.

His interest settled into determination. He would see something of her at Capri and fathom a little, even if the water proved ridiculously shallow. Then, quite unconsciously, a fugitive desire sprang to life far beneath his musing. It would be tremendously interesting to see her thwarted in some great desire; to see her reactions to such a situation. These vague thoughts were only the artist in him asserting itself, the métier of the writer who is interested in character and who impersonally dives into other people's experiences for the purpose of using what he finds for exposition; but, for the moment, they held him enthralled.

In the midst of these reflections he saw her swooping down on him again—for all the world like the onrush of the Victory of Samothrace. During the interval Sorrento had been passed, the point of the peninsula rounded and Capri was now rising out of the golden haze of evening.

"I've been thinking about what you told me," she began, with that direct characteristic of not bothering about leading up to a subject. "I'm inclined to believe you can help me lots."

"I—how?"

"In seeing the villas. I suppose you know every one of them; don't you? I'd like to employ you as my agent while I'm there."

Hogarth flushed at this unexpected assumption; still, he felt he ought to have been prepared for anything. However, for a moment, he remained silent.

"Of course—I understand you don't do this sort of thing regularly; but I don't see why you should mind in this case."

He was still silent, trying to find words that might open her eyes the least bit.

"Then," she went on, evidently interpreting his silence to mean consent, "will you come to the hotel to-morrow morning—say about ten o'clock? I'm going to the Quisisana."

In the end Hogarth laughed. If she was so unconscious of her drastic methods, why should he mind!

"I shall be glad to help you—not as your agent—but—you are quite welcome to any information I may have."

"Then you'll come to-morrow morning at ten?"

"I may not be able to come in the morning." He was determined not to be bullied into an exact hour without having been consulted as to his own convenience. "Perhaps in the afternoon—if I am free."

Her wide apart eyes opened in unpleasant surprise and stared at him, at his shabby clothes and at last at the package beside him. When her glance returned to his face she was met there by his disconcerting smile of amusement.

"Oh, well—then—the afternoon. I don't want to lose any time."

They were in the same boat which carried them from the steamer to the shore. As they neared the stone quay, a little girl who stood in the group awaiting the arrival of the passengers, ran forward to the edge of the water and waved excitedly to Hogarth. Her fresh young voice sang out clearly in a word of greeting. "Papino."

"What a beautiful child!" exclaimed the star-eyed lady. "Is she calling to you?"

Hogarth's face lit up with a glow of pleasure at the words of praise. He nodded and waved his hand to the little girl.

"What does Papino mean? Is that your name?"

"It is the Italian diminutive of father."

When Hogarth turned back to the lady he found her looking at him with an even more intense, probing expression than before. Her glance shifted slowly from Hogarth to the child on the quay.

"Yes—she's extraordinarily like you." Then, with a note that was new and made him think again of unrestrained emotions, she said with the frankest admission of disappointment: "So you're married!"

In some inexplicable way, the note of disappointment smote against Hogarth's consciousness with an unpleasant jar. Confound the woman! At moments her cave characteristics irritated one almost beyond endurance. Was she in reality some prehistoric creature that had been left over to live in this modern world—and to live and feel and crave solely on the

surface. What difference could it possibly make to her if he were ten times married! Why under the sun should her voice have expressed disappointment!

Suddenly he broke into gay laughter, sprang out of the boat and picked the little girl up in his arms.

CHAPTER II

HOGARTH and the little girl started off up the long hill.

The silence of evening came forward to meet them; a church bell, sweet and gentle, sounded softly, as if from some remote corner of the world; a voice, hidden away in luxuriant vineyards, floated up in evening song to the far away heights of Solario; dusk crept up from the sea and wrapped itself slowly, carefully, about the glowing island.

Hogarth clasped the little hand in his and trudged along silently. The soft, clinging, so completely confident touch of those little fingers always brought a thrill of very deep joy to him. He often found himself wondering if all fathers felt that way; if parenthood meant as much to those peasants digging in the vineyards as it did to him. He refuted the idea; surely not. They might love, even adore, their children; but the intellectual thrill, the tremendous realization that here was a part of them—flesh, blood, soul too—surely never reached them; it was something quite beyond the material in life, far removed from the soil; it was something divine—a bit of heaven vouchsafed mortals on this earth.

At a turn in the road the little girl stopped and pointed to the package Hogarth carried.

"For Mammina?" she asked, her eyes full of dancing curiosity.

Hogarth shook his head and smiled into her glow-

ing little face burned brown by the sun and framed by the duskiness of blue black hair; and yet, in spite of evidences of outdoor life, almost painfully delicate and fragile. A quick appreciation of her fragility rushed over him at this moment and robbed his smile of its joy.

"No—it's not for Mammina."

Her eyes flew from his face to the package—they had a way of flying that made one think her thoughts too were always on the wing; it was that which gave her a whimsical, fugitive quality and made her a more distinct personality than most children of six years.

"If it's not for Mammina—then who is it for?" Her question was frankly full of excitement that went in the direction of pleasant conclusions.

"Wait and see."

"Wait!" Her exclamation was full of reproach; it said quite plainly that he was asking the impossible. Then, diplomatically insistent: "How long?"

"Until we reach the villa. You wouldn't have me open it here on this dusty road."

"Until we reach the villa!" She drew in a long breath. "Then, Papino—let's run."

"Up this hill! We'd be out of breath. We wouldn't be able to eat dinner."

"I'm not terribly hungry to-night. And I've seen you run up this hill heaps of times—you and Mammina racing each other."

"Perhaps—but not after a long day in Naples. What have you been doing all day?"

She pushed back her long hair with a gesture of resignation. "We had a nice day."

"Without me?"

"Of course we missed you—most awfully."

"What did you do?"

"Mammina and I had a long walk this morning—up to Tiberio. Mammina took a book and read to me. We took our luncheon too. We spent almost all the day there."

"What did you read?"

"All about the Duchess. I love to hear about the Duchess. Don't you think she's wonderful! Was that lady in the boat with you—the one with the shiny eyes—a Duchess?"

"Shiny eyes!" Hogarth threw back his head and laughed. "What an awful description—and rather exact!"

"I thought her eyes were lovely. Didn't you, Papino?"

Hogarth gave an evasive answer. Why disturb natural impressions, especially if they were agreeable, with introspective criticism!

They reached the central piazza of the town and stopped a few minutes to look towards Naples. Hogarth loved this view; its drama always created in him a responsive thrill. Just now the lights of the far away city were beginning to twinkle mysteriously; the smoke from Vesuvius had become a thin glow of flame; the wide stretches of water were like unlimited folds of variously tinted fabrics—drawn by unseen hands across the world.

Speaking now and then to some shopkeeper, some peasants in their doorways, some English residents, they made their way along the gradually descending street that passes the hotel.

"Is she there, Papino—the lady with the shining eyes?"

Hogarth looked up at the lighted windows and smiled. Yes, she was there; and undoubtedly having all the furniture moved from one room to another and complaining in commanding tones of the lack of hot water and proper plumbing. He knew so well the traditional plaints of American tourists.

"And is she a really-for-truly Duchess?"

This time he laughed gaily. She was so everything that was not a really-for-truly Duchess.

At last they came to a narrow, rocky path between high walls and stopped before a solid wooden gate. Hogarth pulled out a key and unlocked the gate. They entered a small courtyard, paved with red tiles, covered with a trellis of grapevines, and went up stone steps to what was evidently the living floor of the little villa.

The first room they came into was long and somewhat barely furnished which gave it the effect of being much larger than it was. A deep divan and two comfortable chairs, covered with blue chintz faded to a soft, pleasant color, were grouped near a long table and formed the central point of the room. On the table was a rather large carved and gilded wooden vase which served as lamp; the shade made of heavy gold tissue; many books that showed they had been much read, and a wide, shallow Venetian glass bowl filled with marigolds. A grand piano, open, filled one end of the room. The walls were frescoed in panels of sea and landscapes—rather crude work of a past century, but decorative and softened from their original harshness by water stains

and the dimness of age. Low book shelves were placed against the walls and bits of ancient damasks and Genoese velvets served as curtains—or at least placed there to give a mellowing effect. Four painted Venetian chairs, Louis XIV in form, greenish blue with a design of flowers, with rush seats, several low tables of walnut—cobblers' tables from Bologna—holding vases of only marigolds; and a Chinese rug, dull in tone and a bit worn, which covered only the space about the divan and left bare the rest of the floor of red and black tiles;—these completed the furnishings of the room. Three windows, close together and opening to the floor, gave onto a wide terrace.

The pool of light from the lamp and the magic afterglow of sunset which entered through the wide open windows met in the room and created an atmosphere that was delightfully peaceful and restful to the eyes. One felt its charm at once. It was the sort of place in which one would unconsciously feel contented and at peace with the world; to a sensitive observer it spoke of imaginative taste; to a collector of artistic things it told of discrimination rather than expensive outlay.

Hogarth followed his daughter into the room. She looked about swiftly, crept to a window, glanced out, then turned back to him and held a finger to her lips.

"Let's surprise Mammina," she whispered, sinking down, almost lost in the depths of the deep divan. "She doesn't know we are returned."

Hogarth slipped into the place beside her. "Have returned," he corrected softly,

"Oh, dear—Mammina says I always translate from Italian. Am I ever going to learn English really?"

"When you go home—certainly."

Her eyes deepened with a slight shadow which always came with incomplete understanding. "But, Papino, isn't this home?"

He shook his head and shadows crept into his eyes also. "No—this is not really home."

"It is to me. I don't know any other."

"You will—some day."

"Will I like the other?"

"You'll love it."

"Shall we go there soon?"

"Perhaps. Let's hope so."

While they sat on the divan, whispering together, a woman appeared in one of the windows on the terrace and stood there silently looking at them. She was a rather beautiful woman—that is, if one finds beauty in great delicacy and fineness. Fineness was the characteristic of every part of her, features, hands, feet, ankles. She was almost too delicately made, one felt, for the ordinary living of life; it was the delicacy that suggested brittleness, exaggerated daintiness, almost a paucity of real flesh and blood. But this was not due to any lack of virility; indeed there was great intensity and even a certain strength in her personality. Her eyes, deep set, steady, gray, gave an extraordinarily vital quality to her face; framed by black lashes, blue black as was her hair, they gained in brilliancy as they at the same time deepened with gentleness. Extraordinary eyes, many had called them, for while they gave the impression

of being tremendously intellectual they were also immensely alluring. One is inclined to expect coldness, aloofness, indifference with great intellect; in her, none of such characteristics was evident.

Just now, looking at her husband and child, her eyes were filled with a wonderfully caressing glow; but as her glance lingered more definitely on her husband's face, sadness crept quickly into them. She appeared to be searching anxiously for something that his expression would tell her; and not finding it, her eyes showed a quick flash of disappointment that was almost tragedy.

Then, as the little girl turned and saw her, all sadness disappeared, a smile changed her whole aspect; in a moment her whole face flashed with tender, exquisite, glowing beauty. If she could have smiled always she would have been a rarely beautiful woman. It made her irresistibly charming.

"Well—John, a pleasant day?" Her voice came softly; it expressed perfectly the beauty that was in her smile. She crossed to him and kissed him slowly, very tenderly; her eyes dwelt in his through a few moments of silence.

"Pleasant enough—yes." He returned her caress.

"Letters?"

"No."

Sadness again swept over her face. She turned from him so that he might not see it. "There has hardly been time yet. It is a good sign. If they like your manuscript—they are passing it on to other readers."

"Let's hope so."

"Let's believe it."

The little girl stood between them with eyes fastened relentlessly on the package.

"Mammina—see what Papino has brought someone!"

"What is it, John?"

"A surprise."

"For me?"

"No—for myself." A whimsical smile flashed across his face, an expression delightfully like that of his daughter. He picked up the package and laid it importantly across his knees.

"Then it isn't for me!" The little girl's cry of disappointment smote him. He pulled her towards him and put an arm about her. "Couldn't you and I possibly share the same thing, Nini?"

Her dark eyes drew together in a strangely thoughtful expression—at least strangely thoughtful for six years. "I don't understand."

"I wonder if I can explain." He looked at his wife who had sat down beside him. "I could to you. In fact, I shan't have to."

The little girl's fingers were tugging at the cord. "Won't showing what's inside explain?"

Hogarth laughed merrily. "Right you are. So—here goes."

He cut the cord, unwrapped the package and displayed a child's dress of embroidered linen trimmed with crisp taffeta ribbons.

The little girl clapped her hands and danced about in a circle. "It isn't for you, Papino—it's for me! A new dress! Isn't it lovely, Mammina! I want to put it on now—this very minute!"

Hogarth's eyes warmed over her joy; then, ex-

pectantly and with a waiting smile, he turned to his wife. She had already taken the dress from his knees and was examining it carefully.

"This was expensive, John," she said slowly, almost without expression.

"Not very. Besides—what if it were?"

"We can't afford it. It wasn't a necessity."

"Can't we have anything but necessities?"

She shook her head and met his frown with a smile. "You know we can't, John."

"Aren't pleasures a necessity?"

"They don't hold body and soul together."

"Sometimes I think they do. Is there any reason to go on living if we are going to be deprived of all pleasure."

Her smile faded. "Perhaps, John, we have our share of happiness. We have each other—and Nini. Isn't that a great deal more than most people have?"

Hogarth took her hand in his and held it to his lips. "Of course, dearest—only—but you know what I mean. Sometimes it's really unbearable—a deep mental suffering—not to be able to give Nini what other children have—what she ought to have—what I so want her to have. She will be so lovely in that dress. I couldn't resist the temptation to buy it. I'd like her to have only the most beautiful things in the world."

His wife bowed her head silently and a single tear fell on the spotless dress.

"So don't scold me this time, Antonia. Think how long it has been since I've done anything against your wishes."

"Against my wishes! You have never done that."

"Yes I have. I'm doing it all the time. You are so much more practical than I."

"Practical! I wonder if I really am!"

At times, Hogarth wondered so too. He had thought of himself as an idealist until he met Antonia; then realization smashed down upon him and showed him that, by comparison with her, he was almost a sordid materialist. With this realization had come the great change in his life.

When his daughter had interrupted what was to her an entirely irrelevant conversation and marched off proudly with the dress borne aloft in her arms, her acquiescent mother following—Hogarth's thoughts returned to the current Antonia's words had let loose. Perhaps, if he had not accepted so unquestioningly her directing lead, he would have been providing for her and their child luxuries as lavish as those possessed by that stranger on the boat. Would it not have been worth while to have had the satisfaction—sordid satisfaction, even though it might have been—of knowing that he was capable of giving the ones he loved the best the world afforded!

Somehow his encounter with this woman on the boat had accentuated, had thrown up to him in a relentless light, what he was beginning to call his failure. Was not this stranger's attitude towards him, so frankly expressed, exactly what others felt —even though they didn't show it so brutally. No one admired, much less respected, a man who could not spare his family the mortification of continual economy—he, himself, least of all. Yet here he was at thirty in the same boat with men whom he had

always looked down upon without sympathy—with even contempt. Was it a sort of Nemesis that was teaching him to understand, through actual experience, the condition of others!

He rose restlessly and went out on the terrace. For a few moments the beauty of the night softened his mood. After all, he was—at least he had been—tremendously happy here. And eight years of complete happiness is not a small portion of the short life one lives.

How swiftly Capri had thrown its spell upon him and Antonia—that first year of their married life. They had intended to remain only a month; but the first month had slipped into a second and still a third, until a whole year had gone by. Its charm, its tranquillity, its great beauty had chained them; and its economy had made it possible for them—on the funds which had come to him from his first book, funds which had also made a European trip a possibility—to take a little villa there and live very comfortably. So they had remained on and on.

Hogarth's first novel had been written and published before he met Antonia. It was not an artistic piece of work; no one knew that better than he. Critics had dismissed it as puerile; the public had bought it with avidity. It possessed that appeal which had such an extraordinary vogue at the beginning of the nineteenth century—a romantic treatment of historical incident. Soon after its publication he had met Antonia who was at the time leading a quiet existence with her father in the Berkshire Hills. She had told him quite frankly, but with deep, sincere interest, that it was in him to do more

important, more serious work; that he should not waste his talent in catering to indiscriminate taste; that it was not the best in him that he was giving to the world. While he was working on his second book their friendship developed into love. The death of her father had hastened their decision to be married, which was soon followed by their trip abroad.

The second book showed Antonia's influence. It was a distinct advance. The critics were more favorably disposed; and the public, remembering his name and the first novel, had bought it with the expectation of finding what had previously given them so much pleasure. However, they were disappointed; the second novel was not merely narrative, psychology had crept in. His third book was lauded by the critics and entirely neglected by the buying public.

Such failure, with the knowledge that he was doing better work all the time, discouraged Hogarth—at times almost disastrously. The arrival of the baby, very delicate from the beginning, had increased expenses at a time when royalties had ceased to come in. The refusal of his publishers, and subsequent ones, to bring out his fourth book had caused his cup of disappointment to overflow. Only Antonia's courage and confidence in his ultimate success had made him lift up his head hopefully and go on working. The result was always better production; he knew that himself. Adversity and the facing of real problems of life had mellowed his point of view, humanized his touch; and all the time Antonia's extraordinary appreciation of what was real art, her imaginative suggestions, her sympathetic and help-

ful critical attitude were rapidly making him into an artist.

Still, in spite of compensating spiritual companionship, the sordid side of existence, material cravings, thwarted desires—not so much for himself as for the two he loved—had carried him very close to the pit of despair. He spoke of it as the great weakness in his character—this epicurean trait which made the beautiful side of life so necessary for complete happiness. Yet, in a sort of self-palliation, he would often argue that this side of his character, this weak spot, was not exaggerated; he did not crave great wealth; only a fair income would give him the opportunity he craved to make his surroundings what he termed perfect.

He sat down on the terrace wall and looked yearningly out across the bay of Naples. It usually held magic for him; as a rule he responded sensitively to its thrilling beauty. But to-night—no. He did not even see it. His surroundings were his thoughts—and they were drab. He was a failure. Why? He felt that he was doing the best that was in him; he had energy, youth—he was only thirty—and—— Here his thoughts centered in questions. Had he any real talent, any real gift for the profession he had chosen? Was the success of his first book only luck? Were he and Antonia both deluding themselves in thinking he could produce real literature? Was he wasting time in this direction when he should be throwing himself heart and soul into some cut and dried business that would at least insure him a steady income?

The gentle breeze that came up to him from the

olive groves did not sooth him; the shimmering sea held no message; Vesuvius, lazily burning against the purple night, answered none of his questions. But the woman on the boat—not the Victory of Samothrace, but the Victory of Money—hovered just before him. With outstretched wings, wide, enveloping wings of gold, she appeared to be jeering at him and crying out to him that he was a dismal, sordid failure.

CHAPTER III

"IS this where Mr. Hogarth lives?"

Hogarth, alone in the house, heard the voice, recognized it as belonging to the lady on the boat, and smiled. He had not kept the engagement; but she, undaunted, had kept it for him by coming herself to his home. He might have known she would come, he mused, as he heard the door opened to her. It was probably just such insistence as this that had made her stupendous success. Stupendous! The word caught his attention as though it had been spoken instead of being thought. Stupendous success. Yes—that was what she represented.

The hot surge of envy swept over him again; it was still showing in his face as she entered the room, elaborately dressed, in gray chiffon—a veritable "costume" in which shoes and gloves and hat were of the same shade. And it was tremendously becoming. She really appeared radiantly handsome. The soft, fugitive shade was a perfect background for her vivid color, her glowing hair and her starry eyes—though the starry eyes, at the moment, had a frankly angry gleam in them.

"I've been waiting an hour for you! Don't you keep appointments?"

This was her greeting, fired at Hogarth without extended hand and without a smile that might have palliated the severity of manner and words.

He smiled slowly and made no attempt to hurry

over a reply; he did however make a slight gesture towards a chair which was a courteous invitation to be seated, a gesture she apparently did not see or did not intend to notice.

His smiling silence may have irritated her or it may have puzzled her. At any rate she remained standing and staring at him.

At length, still smiling and more amused than he dared show, he said easily: "Won't you sit down. I have just ordered tea."

"Then—you don't mean to explain—to offer any excuses!"

"Explanations—excuses—are so futile; don't you think? You wouldn't believe me if I offered them."

"I'm sure I wouldn't."

"Ah—so there you are! I was right in not offering them."

"Why didn't you come? Didn't you want to?"

She really was wonderful, thought Hogarth; one of the most uncompromisingly frank types he had ever encountered. Her reality was unbelievable.

"Are you asking for the truth—or a polite answer?"

"Nonsense! I want to know if you are going to help me find a villa or not. If not—I must look about for someone else."

"Perhaps that would be much better."

He thought she would surely turn now, annihilate him with one of her contemptuous glances and sweep out of the room. Instead, she sat down in the chair he had indicated, quite indifferent, apparently, to the folds in which her gown might fall, a fact which impressed Hogarth as showing another somewhat

unique characteristic—an entire lack of self consciousness.

"You said you knew the place well—that you had lived here a long time."

He remained standing, looking down at her. This gave him a rather satisfactory sensation—this looking down at her; he did so mentally and he liked a similar physical emotion—which was impossible when both were standing.

"Yes—I have lived here eight years."

"What is your objection to helping me?"

"My reason is quite simple. You and I would not like the same thing."

"That hasn't anything to do with the matter. I only want you to show me what there is. I don't want you to decide for me. I'll know what I want when I see it."

The maid entered at this moment with the tea tray. She brought a low table from one end of the room, placed it before the divan, spread a cloth and arranged the tea things. Having lighted the alcohol lamp she left the room.

The lady watched the preparations and appeared intently interested in the details of the tea service—the painted Venetian tray, the cloth of heavy Sicilian filet, the service of old English plate and the china which was decorated in a heavy design of flowers. While Hogarth sat down behind the table, she looked about the room, still apparently intent upon details—this time the furnishings.

"How do you like your tea?"

"I never drink it."

"Some toast—a cake?"

"Nothing."

He poured out a cup for himself and began drinking it with no further attempt at conversation.

"Is this what you like?" she finally asked, when her inspection of the room appeared finished.

"This? What?"

"This room—these things."

"I find the room rather jolly—and the things appear to fit into it quite well."

"Did they cost much?"

"Very little."

"Are they worth anything?"

"Not from a collector's point of view."

"Then—why do you have them?"

"I'm not a collector. These things are what I can afford to have. They are amusing—in a way. My wife and I had good fun chosing them."

"I have an idea that architect of mine would like them. Myself—I'd call them a lot of junk."

"Probably most people would."

"I wonder if I'll ever grow to like things like this!"

"Why bother about it—one way or another! Why not have the things about you that appeal to you? The things one likes express one's personality. I can't imagine living among things I didn't like—unless it was a necessity. Surely you don't have to do that."

"No—I don't—only——"

"Yes?"

"I'd like to know why some of you people like this sort of thing and the rest of us don't."

Hogarth offered her a cigarette from a battered old snuff box of silver gilt. She accepted it and,

when lighted from the match he held for her, inhaled deeply. It was evident that she was fond of smoking.

Hogarth moved farther back on the divan and lounged comfortably. Drawing thoughtfully at his cigarette, he appeared to be pondering over her last remark.

"Perhaps it is very much what I said to you, day before yesterday, on the boat. Take that bit of succhi d'erba," he said, indicating a somewhat tattered piece of painted linen which hung on the wall. "If one didn't know what that was, one would be inclined to call it a rag. However—it isn't a rag. It is an original design from which a tapestry was woven. It was painted sometime about the close of Michael Angelo's life—the early part of the sixteenth century. If one knows something about that period, one finds that bit of painting interesting as expressing an idea in the taste of that time. Then of course, *au fond,* we think it decorative. It fills in that space and gives perspective to the room."

Hogarth stopped abruptly and smiled. Why under the sun was he elaborating on a subject which he was sure meant nothing to her! Still, she had listened attentively, even interestedly, her glance moving all the time from him to the painted linen and back again.

"I don't know anything about the sixteenth century." She said this with no suggestion of apology or defense. It was a mere statement of fact.

"Then of course it wouldn't interest you—unless you happen to have a certain *flair* for decorative effects."

"I like modern things."

"Then I'd have them."

"I do."

Her way of smoking a cigarette was perfectly in accord with her manner. She inhaled deeply; she blew the smoke out, often through her nose, in strong, even puffs; she flicked the ashes with steady fingers.

"My architect said I ruined the house he built for me—just because I wouldn't let him clutter it up with rickety, second hand furniture. He said he wanted me to have the most 'smashing'—his word, not mine—house in California."

"And you didn't want a 'smashing' house?"

"I wanted a house people would talk about—yes."

"Well," Hogarth was smiling broadly now, "didn't you get it?"

"No. It looked like anybody else's—except it was bigger."

"Then—you weren't satisfied?"

"No. That's what I came to Europe for—to find out what was the matter with it. It was his suggestion—my architect's."

"And—have you found out?"

"I believe I have."

"What was the trouble?"

"It didn't have this sort of a look to it."

"Still—if you don't like these things, as I said before—why have them?"

She smiled at his question. It was the first time Hogarth had seen her smile and he was struck by the change it made in her. All her severity and harshness disappeared and left a sort of frank young

girlishness in her face that was quite charming. He caught himself staring at her in amazement.

"You haven't been at home lately or you'd know what I mean. Everybody there, if they're able to, wants to put something over on the others. Do you know what I mean?"

Hogarth was thoroughly delighted with her now. Her manner of expressing herself, her use of slang, her what he called thorough Americanism was delightfully amusing and effective.

"Of course I know what you mean. Almost all of us, no matter where we live, want to do something of the sort. It is no more an American trait than a European; only Americans, with their unlimited amount of money, have so much more opportunity. So you want to have a house that will be unique in California?"

She took another cigarette which he offered her and drew at it again in her intent way. "I never thought of using the word unique. I don't want something that will make people laugh. I want something that people who know what's what will admire."

"Yet you want such a place even though you don't like it yourself—even though it doesn't express you in any way!"

"What do you mean by expressing me?"

"I mean—we usually have things about us that we like. If we like certain things, that means that our taste goes in that direction. For instance, this room represents my wife's and my taste. It wouldn't in any way represent yours; would it?"

She did not answer this at once and her glance,

roving about the room, made Hogarth feel that she was, for the first time since he had seen her, not entirely sure of what she wanted to say, perhaps not entirely sure of what she really thought. There was something in this first sign of hesitancy that was allied to the smile he had noticed a few moments before. It made her less assured and younger, even more womanly, at least womanly in the gentler significance of the word. In the other meaning—the female sense—she was unquestionably potent. Looking at her more closely, he felt that he had never seen a woman more strongly sexed. Her figure with its generous curves, her deep bosom, her round, full throat, her glowing hair and magnificent eyes—all made her a rather superb example of the primitive life force. She made him think of ancient prototypes of women which the world had worshipped—goddesses—Aphrodite—Venus—the Madonna. Somehow, with her resplendent health, her intense virility, her clear, uncultured—he sought for a more precise expression—undirected?—no, not quite that—perhaps her untrained, unmolded intellect—she began to impress him as being a sort of reincarnation of Ceres, worshipped for her fecundity.

Her voice brought his wandering thoughts back with a distinct shock.

"Highbrows would call this good taste; wouldn't they?"

Hogarth laughed boyishly. No matter what she might be, he found her affording him great fun.

"Perhaps so. I believe people of a certain culture would find our things amusing."

"Amusing! Do you mean funny?"

"No—not exactly. Amusing is a word used by artists. When they use it they mean something interesting, a bit original."

"I remember now. My architect was using it all the time."

This architect, thought Hogarth, must have been a somewhat potent factor in her life. He asked if she had found him interesting.

"Interesting! I should say not! He was an awful bore. Stuck on himself—well rather! Sometimes he was insulting—when I wouldn't let him have his way."

"And after all your trouble you weren't satisfied!"

"No—I wasn't. But I had my way."

"Wouldn't you have preferred being satisfied to having your way?"

"Not a bit of it. I've always had my way—and I always will."

"Still—you weren't satisfied."

An unpleasant gleam sprang into her starry eyes. For a second Hogarth received the impression of standing on a precipice beneath which was something hideous, but before he had looked into the depths, a question from her shifted his thoughts.

"What makes you think I wasn't satisfied?"

"You said yourself the house had not pleased you."

This appeared to relieve her; at least the angry gleam no longer shone in her eyes.

"Oh, my house!" she answered negligently. Then she rose and went towards the windows and finally out onto the terrace.

It was that beautiful hour of the day—more per-

fect perhaps in Italy than in any country of the world—when the harshness of day had deepened into vivid, passionately glowing lights. Down the olive clad slopes, shadows and shafts of blazing sunlight were struggling for supremacy; the sea, stretching placidly out in undefined distances, was just taking on the classic "wine dark" tinge; the bare precipice of Solario, changed now from gray rock to sparkling glass, rose majestically into the azure sky. All nature seemed hushed under the changing spell. A cloak of penetrating silence—hardly silence as it was made up of so much that was vibration and sensation—was wrapping itself surely, slowly, about the world. A magic moment!—one in which the spirit of man seemed in ecstatic pause.

The lady, standing beside Hogarth, looked on coolly, unemotionally, and yet somehow with very apparent earnestness. Hogarth would have given a great deal to know what she was thinking of at this moment.

"I wonder if I'll ever grow to like all this!" she said, almost reflectively.

Again he found himself repeating, this time a bit impatiently: "If you don't—why bother?"

She turned and faced him. "Sometime—I may tell you—when I get to know you better."

"If you know me better you may never tell me. Confidence is so much easier with complete strangers."

She was looking at him intently, searchingly; it was almost an embarrassing stare, and very appraising.

"Are you the kind of man that tells his wife everything?"

Hogarth frowned and turned away; and as he did so, his glance traveled down the road and came to rest on his wife and daughter, on their way towards the house.

"Here comes my wife now. You might tell her at the same time."

She turned quickly into the house. "I'm going now."

"Won't you wait and meet her?"

"No. I don't like women. They bother me."

He followed her to the door and opened it for her.

Once more she looked at him appraisingly. "Are you going to help me find a villa?"

He smiled and met her glance steadily. "You don't need my help. I'm inclined to think you don't need anyone's help. You will get what you want—entirely alone."

"I always have."

For a second, as he met her eyes, he felt he was once more on the edge of the precipice beneath which something horrible existed; but, as before, she had turned and was walking away before he had seen into the depths.

"The cave woman has just been here," Hogarth said as Antonia came out on the terrace.

"The woman you met on the boat? What was she like to-day?"

"More primitive than ever."

Antonia's eyes narrowed with humor. "Has she fallen in love with you?"

Hogarth caught her hands and drew her down on the balustrade beside him. "If I were an egoist, you'd have an awful influence on me. Women don't fall in love with men of my type."

"One woman did."

"And is it for the purpose of convincing yourself of your own good taste that makes you believe other women would do the same thing?"

"You know very well, John, several have. I suppose it's that false air of sympathy you have which attracts them. If they only knew that your questions and interest were only an author's insatiable desire for information!"

"Is it only that with you and Nini?"

She leaned forward and kissed him gently. "Nini and I are particularly blessed among women."

They sat a long time silent, close together in the warm twilight.

Finally Hogarth broke into his delightfully boyish laughter. "At any rate—I hope the cave woman won't fall in love with me!"

"Egoist! Why?"

"Because she said she always got what she wanted —and I'm inclined to believe her." He sighed with an assumption of alarm. "Somehow—I'd hate to have her get me."

Antonia turned away with a light laugh meant to hide a fleeting expression of fear that sprang quickly into her eyes—but as quickly died away.

CHAPTER IV

"WE met her on the Tragara this afternoon. She recognized Nini and spoke to her—and ignored me as completely as though I hadn't been there. But I must admit she was very nice to Nini. Perhaps her hatred of the female sex doesn't extend to children. Just before she left Nini I overheard her say: 'Tell your father I am still looking for a villa—and need his help!'" Antonia waited for some comment from Hogarth and, receiving none, added: "Aren't you going to help her find something, John? It's rather unfriendly, leaving her in the hands of agents."

"Why should I help her?" Hogarth replied indifferently. "Capri is small enough for one to find out in a day or two all the villas for sale. Besides—do you know—she has a most irritating effect upon me. She makes me almost rude."

Antonia smiled slowly, a charming, whimsical smile, full of camaraderie and, at the moment, a bit chaffing. "She interests you too; doesn't she?"

"As a type—yes."

"Aren't all types grist to the mill of an author?"

"I admit that—but some types are vastly annoying."

"She! How?"

"For instance—her attitude towards you. Why should she have left the other day when she saw you coming? Why should she have spoken to Nini to-day

and not to you? She hasn't the first idea of breeding."

"She admitted hating women."

"Even so, that's no excuse for showing it in bad manners. All civilized people repress some of their feelings."

Antonia's smile ran into a low laugh. "But, John dear, you said she was a cave woman. Surely you don't expect a primitive creature to smother emotion. That wouldn't be in character."

"I expect every woman I meet to be courteous to my wife."

Antonia's dark eyes deepened with amusement. "How frightfully stuffy you are, John. That doesn't sound a bit like you. Besides—she may really be quite conventional—when it's a matter of other women—and not having met me considers it better taste not even to see me. At any rate, I'm not at all offended. I'm amused. Yes—really I am. More than that—I'm curious. I'm dying to know what she'll say to you next time."

"If you are so curious, why not call on her yourself? If you insist, I'll go with you and present you most formally."

Antonia apparently considered this, not answering at once and seemingly giving all her attention to the piece of *petit point* she was embroidering. "That wouldn't be amusing in the least," she finally said, with a flying glance at Hogarth. "And it isn't necessary for me to explain why. It would be heaps more fun hearing you tell about your visit afterwards. With me present, she'd be anything but primitive." Then, as an after thought: "You might take Nini

with you. Nini admires her immensely—says she has such jolly, shiny eyes."

"Shiny eyes—how horrible!"

"No—they aren't horrible at all. I noticed them, too. They are rather wonderful—in a hard, brilliant way."

Her insistence, maintained in a bantering tone, ended with Hogarth's calling that afternoon. His reason for doing so was not quite clear to himself; and in thinking it over afterwards, he was inclined to throw the blame on Antonia. She had rather stressed the idea that his not going was unnecessarily rude.

His return from the visit showed a countenance somewhat stern. Antonia, across the table, a low bowl of marigolds and two candles between them, watched him with amused expectancy lurking in the depths of her eyes.

"I can't wait much longer, dear. It's asking too much of mere woman."

He looked up. "What do you mean?"

She mocked him gently. "The sunset. Aren't you going to tell me about it? Was it very beautiful?"

They both laughed.

"She's quite the most impossible woman I ever met. Her point of view is restricted definitely to the purely commercial."

"Isn't that in character with her native land? Aren't we considered by the world to be the products of glorified commerce?"

"Not in our personal relations, I hope. The woman wants to buy me."

"You—or your opinions?"

"My time, principally, I think. She said she needed help in deciding about a villa; unprejudiced help, as she expressed it. She is suspicious of the property agents here. After putting some direct questions, I think she reached the conclusion that I was not clever enough to have obtained any promise of a commission on a sale, so asked me to be her personal representative, a sort of adviser, at the rate of one hundred dollars a month—retaining fee, she called it."

"Ah—so she mentioned figures!"

"She mentioned nothing else. She lives in a milieu of figures—of more than three naughts."

Antonia sat back in her chair, her hands resting placidly before her on the polished surface of the table. They were pretty hands, finely, delicately molded, almost too fragile, yet somehow subtly suggestive of strength. Looking at them, one felt that they were very dependable hands and so quietly, simply noble.

"One hundred dollars!" she said softly. "That would be a tremendous help to us."

Hogarth looked at her as though her words had startled him. "You don't imagine I'd consider accepting her offer!"

She rose from her chair and went round to him and laid her hands on his shoulders. Looking down at his head, her eyes glowed with tenderness. "John, dear, we are very poor. We need money, a little money, very badly—almost desperately. If the offer is made in good faith, and you can earn what she offers, you must do it."

"My opinion is not worth that much."

"It is—if she wants it. I think your advice is worth a good deal to her—surely worth a great deal more than these agents who are trying to sell her a villa. John, don't let your dislike of her interfere. Help her. I ask it of you, not for yourself, not for me, but for Nini."

Hogarth started as though sudden pain had shot through him. "You don't think——"

"No, no—it's nothing serious. I am not at all alarmed, only—Nini does look so delicate, so thin. I'm going to take her to Doctor Catazzo to-morrow. He may suggest something that will build her up a bit."

Hogarth reached for her hands and held them to his lips.

"All right. I'll go see her again to-morrow. And, yes—I suppose I'll accept her offer—if I can manage to swallow my pride sufficiently."

In the morning, when he appeared in flannels and a general air of spruceness, Antonia smiled with satisfaction. She knew he had decided to accept her advice. She followed him to the door and laughingly commented that his expression—one of silent, resigned acquiescence—suggested someone offering himself for sacrifice. He replied, a bit solemnly, that his conversations with the cave woman called for more self-control than he had ever before found necessary, that she brought out all the primitive in him also—that is, if one could call a certain laxity in what he considered the proper attitude towards woman, primitive. In her presence, he was always forcing himself to remember to be courteous.

Her conquering smile, as she came towards him in the garden of the hotel, accentuated this reaction. She was in white, dress, shoes, parasol and hat, a perfectly chosen *ensemble,* probably from the most expensive *coutourière* in Paris, and effectively simple. Even if she didn't know how to furnish houses, thought Hogarth, she knew perfectly well how to dress herself—a matter of money, not taste, for no one could go very far wrong when the best Paris offered was at one's disposal.

"I knew you would come," she said, still with the conquering smile that was not at all girlish and was, to Hogarth, immensely irritating. She did not offer her hand; she never had in any of their meetings.

"Then you knew more than I did." He said this severely and avoided her probing eyes.

"Did it take you all night to find out you had decided?"

"No. It took me one minute—long enough for my wife to tell me it was necessary."

"We are always wiser than you."

"I admit my wife's superiority." He purposely stressed the possessive.

The conquering smile disappeared. "What were her convincing arguments?"

Hogarth smiled and looked away. Would she never accept inference!

"Do you need money?"

His smile changed quickly into a frown of displeasure. This was going beyond all decency. In spite of himself, he flushed deeply.

"Aren't you a successful author?"

"No." One had to answer some of her questions.

"Why not?"

"Publishers—and the reading public—don't like my work."

"Can't you do what they want?"

"I—I suppose I could. My wife believes in my living up to ideals."

The lines about her mouth tightened. "Still—if you need money——"

"She thinks—and I also—that there can be no happiness or satisfaction in doing work one is not proud of."

"Not even when it's necessary—when it would keep the wolf from the door!"

They had been strolling slowly towards an end of the garden where some comfortable willow chairs were placed. Here she sat down and opened a large gold cigarette case encrusted with diamonds—Hogarth noticed its expensive, vulgar design; the sort of thing jewelers turn out for just such purchasers—and chose a cigarette. His reaction at this moment was not to light a match for her; however, he did. Then, not being offered a cigarette by her, he took out his own case.

"Don't you like mine?" she asked quickly.

"I supposed they were specially for your own use."

"What rot! I may be everything else—but I'm not stingy. Take the whole lot if you want them. There are plenty more in the trunks—boxes, I should say."

"Why boxes?"

"Isn't that the smart word now? That companion of mine is always using it. She was recommended to

me as speaking perfect English. Aren't you going to sit down?"

"I thought we were to look for villas."

"No—we're just going to talk this morning. I'm rather set up over having my way. To tell you the truth, I wasn't at all certain you would come." She inhaled deeply and blew the smoke with vehemence through her nostrils. "I might have known it, though. I always get what I go after."

Hogarth felt his antipathy fading under the deep interest her superb assurance created. He lighted a cigarette and sat down. A novel about her would be a masterpiece—only everyone would call it exaggerated. The questions she had so coolly asked and which he had almost as coolly answered could hardly, he imagined, have been spoken between two civilized people of to-day; surely not between a man and a woman; perhaps between two men, employer and employee, judge and criminal, gentleman and valet. Yet both of them had spoken with a certain calm indifference, a certain impersonality, and truth had been reached on both sides. That made it rather thrilling, this sudden arrival at truth. He could not imagine Antonia and himself going so relentlessly, so directly, into the blazing light of facts. They would be too sensitive, too self-conscious, too aware of the danger of offense. But this woman appeared quite unaware of the possibility of offense. Or was it that she did not care! Hogarth felt fairly sure that it was the latter. Yes—he was quite sure of it. She didn't give a hang for other people's feelings; perhaps, not having any herself, she couldn't imagine their existence in others.

"Have you never failed to get what you wanted?"

She met this with a calm, reflective expression—if her expression could ever be called reflective. She shook her head slowly. "Why should I fail? Why should anybody—who has enough money?"

"Then you have always been rich?"

Her calm expression was subtly changed by the tightening of her lips. "No. I was poor once—terribly poor."

"Ah—then you know what wanting things means!"

"No—I don't. As soon as I found out I wanted things I went to work to get them."

"Without money?"

"No—not without money. You can't get anything without money. Haven't you found that out yet? The thing to do is to get the money first. After that, it's all easy enough. Oh, it can be done. The trouble with people is they don't *want* hard enough—they haven't got guts enough to get out and make the necessary money."

"It would be interesting to know how you made it—if you care to tell."

She drew deeply at the cigarette—she had been smoking constantly—and looked at Hogarth through a short, appraising silence.

"If I told you—would I be talking for the public?"

Again he flushed, resenting the fact and then admitting that he had opened the way for insult. "I beg your pardon. Shall we talk about your villa?"

"Don't beg my pardon. I love to talk about myself; don't you?"

This disarmed him completely and brought a laugh.

"I got my money like most women—and some men—by selling myself. Oh, you needn't look horrified. I married him. I picked him out when I was sixteen and kept my eyes on him. When I was eighteen I went after him—and got him. It wasn't very hard work. I was better looking then than I am now. He was old—and lonesome—had struck gold and didn't know what to do with it. Well—I showed him how. He didn't live but five years."

What Antonia would have called false sympathy sprang to life in Hogarth's eyes. "It must have been terribly hard for you."

Her eyes opened wide with surprise. "Hard! Not a bit of it! Why should it have been? He gave me everything I'd set my heart on."

"But—you couldn't have loved him!"

"Nobody ever said I did."

Hogarth remained a moment silent, stunned before her attitude. She, watching him and apparently understanding his silence, laughed with what sounded like real merriment.

"Does it take your breath away?"

"It is rather inexplicable to me. I was just trying to imagine myself in such a situation. Was there any reason for your doing this—marrying this man beyond your own desires?"

"Absolutely nothing else."

"No one was dependent upon you?"

"Not a living soul. I was an orphan."

Again Hogarth was silent. Finally he shook his head. "It's quite beyond my comprehension. I

could understand your doing it for others; for yourself alone—no. And since then—have you had everything you wanted?"

"Everything. Except," she frowned quickly, "that house I told you about. And that was my fault. I had it the way I wanted and afterwards found out it wasn't what I wanted."

"And now—you are looking for something else?"

"Im going to be sure this time that I know what I want. That's why I came to Europe. I've never been here before. I began with spending three months in London, then three in Paris, two in Rome —and here I am."

"Now—you think of stopping here in Capri?"

"I'm *thinking* of it—yes."

She met his eyes steadily with this last remark and held them, to him, an uncomfortably long time. Then she shifted her glance and looked down across the grove of silver green olives that stretched from the hotel garden to Hogarth's little villa, just showing on the ledge from which the precipice of Solario sprang up.

Hogarth was glad of a few moments free from conversation. His critical faculties were oddly active in her presence, but more odd still were the topsy-turvy thoughts and sensations that coursed through him. Resentment, as at first sight of her, still formed the foundation of his attitude. In spite of amusement, curiosity, interest—all of which she aroused in him—he still felt that he could not completely master what he felt was an instinctive hatred of her. What he called her intense vulgarity explained this feeling to him. She was so definitely

everything that he had a whole-hearted contempt for. He found himself wondering, as she looked calmly away from him, why God had made her. What use was she in the scheme of the universe? Did she mean anything to any living being? Of course there were the companion and the maid and the dogs. She was affording them a living. And her demand for luxuries was supporting many others. Rich people gave employment to many. That was an argument he himself had often advanced against socialisitc accusations. But in personal relations, was she doing anything? Had she any affections, any ties, any love in her life? Somehow he thought not. Nothing in her conversation had suggested such things. Surely nothing in her personality or in her attitude towards life had indicated the existence of such elements. Yet his study of character had led him to look for the good in everyone—a pleasant sort of belief that buoyed him up at times. She must have such a side—if one could dig it out. He found himself wondering if he would ever see this side of her.

"It's funny to find a young American man living in a place like this." Her eyes were again upon him.

"I've been here eight years."

"Don't you feel like you were in back water?"

"No—not with my tastes—and my work."

"I've never known a man with your tastes before—except that architect I told you about. But I didn't like him. You know," she leaned forward and clasped both hands about a knee, her attitude suggesting a decision suddenly reached, "you've got exactly what I want."

"I! What under the sun have I, of all people in the world, that you want?"

"You've got everything that I haven't. You've got what I suppose that architect would call background. He told me I didn't have it at all. I didn't know exactly what he meant when he said it but I always thought it was a polite way of telling me my taste was rotten. By the way—what do you think of me?"

Hogarth started. What had gone before was as nothing to the present trend of the conversation.

"Oh, don't be timid about saying what you think. I'm not. We've been talking round the bush ever since we met. I liked you the first moment I laid eyes on you—on the boat. You looked sort of careless and indifferent and used to things. Just your shabby clothes had what I used to call a swell air till somebody told me it was a common word to use." She broke into a hearty laugh, the first hearty one Hogarth had heard from her, and unconsciously he squirmed. How often he had written of a person's laugh showing definitely refinement or lack of it! The want of modulation in hers, its quality of hard recklessness, would have placed her without any spoken word. And her words which followed close upon it!

"Do you find me common?"

Hogarth was rapidly reaching a point of dizziness from too many and too varying emotions.

"I can't imagine anything more so than to tell it you even if I thought it."

"Then you do. If you don't contradict a thing at

once you believe it. Now—let's get down to business. What's the matter with me?"

Hogarth rose with what he meant to be dignity, though he was conscious that dignity in such a situation was out of the question. "I——"

"Sit down. I'm paying for your time and I intend to talk about anything I want to. I want you to help me on this background business." Again the laughter, this time harsher and louder than before. She appeared to be enjoying herself immensely. "You can say all the rough things you want to to me."

"But—I don't want to."

"Anyhow, I want you to. I suppose you think I've lost my mind, talking to you this way. But I haven't—not a bit of it. I've got my eyes fixed right on the main object. I told you I liked you the first time I saw you. I've liked you better each time since. Now—why can't we have a perfectly legitimate business arrangement? I want you to show me what I need—and help me get it. I've tried women. They're no good for my purposes. A woman can't show another woman anything. Besides—I hate them. Cats! It takes a man to do anything with a woman. You don't know any more than we do, but some queer quirk in us makes us think you do. Well—what do you say?"

Hogarth, still standing, softened a bit; he even smiled. "What you ask is quite impossible."

"What's impossible about it?"

"I'm not a—a—" he sought a precise expression—"a creator of missing backgrounds."

Her laughter jarred through him; the subtle change in her whole personality struck him with

renewed, unpleasant force. She was much more at ease now, not that she had not been before, but now there was a sort of intimate familiarity in her manner.

"Missing background! That's good. So that's what I haven't got; is it? Well—I'm going to get it—and you're going to help me."

"Indeed I'm not."

Her lips tightened. "You think it's impossible?"

"Nothing will be impossible for you."

"H-m-m."

Hogarth picked up his hat and stick and made a bow. "Good morning."

She did not rise, evidently casting about in her thoughts for something new. "You're pretty stubborn—but I'll break you yet."

Hogarth turned down the walk. She rose quickly and followed him. When she was beside him, he stopped.

"I'm going to make you do it."

"I refuse—positively."

"Why?"

"The idea is preposterous."

"Not if you'll do what I want."

"Which is exactly what I do not want to do."

They walked in silence through the hotel corridor to the outer door. As they stood there a moment, Hogarth forcing a smile, she frankly frowning, a group of children passed by in the street and Hogarth caught a kiss waved to him from his daughter.

She saw the quick change in Hogarth's expression

as his glance rested on the little girl. Her eyes suddenly gleamed with a new idea.

"I believe you adore that child. What do you call her?"

"Nini."

"Why under the sun did you give her a foolish name like that?"

"Most Italians call their babies Nini. Somehow, we've clung to it. Her name is really Jeanne."

Another short silence. "Why don't you do something for her? She looks awfully puny."

Hogarth started as though a swift pain had taken hold of him. "You think she looks bad too?"

"Anyone can see that. She looks like a gust of wind would blow her away."

"My wife is taking her to the doctor this afternoon."

Her expression deepened with concentration, though her next question was put casually. "Is there a good doctor here? I'd like to know—in case I need one."

"We have Doctor Catazzo."

"Catazzo." She repeated the name, as though impressing it on her memory. "Is he the one you are sending your daughter to this afternoon?"

Hogarth nodded and again took off his hat and bowed. "Good morning."

She appeared on the point of detaining him, then quickly changed her mind. "I'll write you this afternoon."

"Please don't. The whole idea is too absurd."

"My mind is made up."

"So is mine."

"We'll see."

She watched him disappear down the street, then turned to the *concierge's* desk and gave an order for Doctor Catazzo to be sent for at once.

CHAPTER V

DURING luncheon Antonia asked no questions. Intuition counseled her to await Hogarth's recountal of the morning's experience; a certain preoccupation, almost irritation—a trait in him practically unknown to her—kept her silent. Luncheon passed with chatter on Jeanne's part, responsiveness on Antonia's and silence from Hogarth.

After luncheon, Hogarth announced that he was going for a sail, that the little boat they rented from an old fisherman at the Piccola Marina had been repainted and put in good order; he wanted to try it and would not be back until late.

Just before leaving he kissed Jeanne more tenderly than usual and then glanced anxiously at Antonia. "She is too thin. Be sure to take her to Catazzo this afternoon."

Antonia nodded and rested her hand on Jeanne's hair.

"No more tonics, please Mammina." Jeanne's voice and face became plaintive over the prospect.

"Let's hope not. But you *do* want to be a fat little girl; don't you?—so as to go on long walks with Papino."

Jeanne admitted that, but thought there must be other ways of gaining the desired result than with bitter medicine.

When Hogarth came in late that evening, he went straight to his room to change for dinner, stopping

only a moment at Antonia's room to call in for news from the Doctor. Antonia replied that there was nothing serious, that she would tell him at dinner. When they met at the table, with Jeanne safely off to bed, Antonia was shocked at the expression of Hogarth's face. He looked years older and infinitely tired.

"Something has happened, John!"

His eyes, filled with bitter disappointment, met hers. "I stopped at the post office on my way back. The manuscript has been returned."

Antonia's hardly breathed "Ah" came with a warm flow of sympathy. His disappointment was her own; but she always tried to hide her own discouragement from him.

"I'm a failure, Antonia, a dismal failure. A man that can't support his wife and child ought to be put off the earth. He's an encumbrance to the world."

"One who doesn't make the effort is—yes. But you, John, you are struggling all the time. No one could work harder."

"And to less effect." He lowered his head in his hands with an access of discouragement new to him. "I had counted so on this last publisher accepting the novel. I had even gone so far as to hope for an advance payment."

If he had been looking at Antonia at that moment he would have seen the pain that flashed across her face.

"I wonder what's the matter with the novel! You *do* think it's good?"

"I know it. I'm sure it will make a reputation for you some day."

"Some day. That's not very comforting at this moment."

"All authors have the same experience."

"No—not all. There are many who succeed from the very beginning."

"I wonder if that sort of work lives?"

"I don't think I would question that if it furnished the means to give you and Nini what you need."

"Don't think of that, John. We really have all we need—in having you. Nothing else matters. Please—please don't be discouraged." She forced him to answer her with a brave smile.

"What did the Doctor say about Nini?"

Antonia's glance was evasive. "The same things all doctors say. There is nothing serious the matter with her. A change of food, a tonic—you know."

Hogarth, preoccupied, missed the inflection of her voice. At any other time he would have been quick to notice it. Instead, he rushed on with the subject that had filled his thoughts all the afternoon. "I can't go on with that horrible woman, Antonia. I've tried all day long to convince myself that I would—just because we need the money. But she is too horrible—too offensive—that's all there is to it. She even went so far as to threaten me this morning."

"Threaten you! How?"

"Oh—she said she had never failed to have her way. That's a sort of obsession with her. As we parted she said she wouldn't fail this time."

The pain flashed again into Antonia's face. "You mean you have definitely refused to help her?"

"Yes—definitely—once for all. I don't want to see her again."

Quickly following his words the gate bell tinkled. Both agreed to have the maid say they were out—neither was in a mood for visitors—a precaution however that was unnecessary as the maid returned with a letter which she handed to Hogarth. He looked at the envelope, an unusually large one of blue paper, addressed to him in a bold, rather dashing handwriting.

"I'm sure it's from her," he said with a scowl. "She said she was going to write. I think I'll tear it up without reading it. It's only more insistence." He threw the envelope on the table.

Antonia reached for it. "May I read it?"

At Hogarth's nod, she tore the envelope open and drew out the letter. Hogarth, watching her, saw her face light up with a vivid flush. A radiance seemed suddenly to have illumined her. A smothered exclamation, of pleasure, even joy, increased his amazement. Finally, he saw tears show in her eyes. Without speaking, she pushed the letter towards him. He picked it up and read it rapidly.

"I am enclosing herewith a check for five hundred dollars—advance payment for services to be rendered. I shall expect you to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock, Mary Watson."

Looking up, Hogarth met Antonia's glowing eyes.

"What does it mean, John?"

In broken, detached, unfinished sentences, he recounted the conversation of the morning. She did not once interrupt him. With hands clasped eagerly in her lap, her head bent forward so that

her eyes did not meet his, she listened intently. Once or twice a smile fluttered across her lips.

"And this is how she intends to have her way," he ended, pointing to the check.

Antonia made no comment. She remained as silent as while he had been talking. When he got up impatiently and walked back and forth across the room, her glance followed him furtively.

"Did you ever know of anything quite so brutally insulting?" he burst out.

Antonia attempted to keep her voice very calm. "Insulting! How?"

"You don't mean to say, Antonia, that it doesn't strike you as extraordinary?"

"Extraordinary—yes. Everything you have told me of her is that. This letter is only in character."

"I admit that—extraordinarily vulgar character!"

"Yes—vulgar—perhaps. Almost all intensely determined people are vulgar. They have to ride a bit roughshod to gain their ends; haven't they?" Her glance fell to her hands and it was apparent, during the next few moments, that she was in deep contemplation. Then: "What, exactly, does she want you to do?"

Hogarth broke into loud, mirthless laughter. "I think what she really wants is for someone to try to make a lady out of her."

A smile lurked on Antonia's lips. "Well—can't you?"

"You ask that—after what I have told you!"

"Her realization that you represent something that is extraneous and above anything she has known

before is a promising sign. Appreciation is an advanced step in knowledge."

Hogarth came towards her with an expression of half anger, half amazement. "You talk as if I were considering the matter."

"Why shouldn't you, John? Why shouldn't you help her? You might be a tremendous influence for good in her life. I hardly see how you can refuse her. I shouldn't want to. It's bound to be a tremendously interesting experience—and amusing."

He drew back offended. "Antonia, you don't seem to realize how absurd, how sordid, how cheap it would be for a man to do such a thing!"

"No—I see none of that. Doctors, preachers, teachers—all do very similar things. As a matter of fact," she lifted her eyes wtih a gay light in them, "it might be called uplift work."

"You appear to take it lightly," he said, rather more to himself than to her. "I only wish I could."

"You will, John, as soon as you realize the amusement to be got out of the situation. It's rather unlike you not to see that at once."

He began pacing the floor again, this time with hands deep in pockets and head bent forward. Antonia's eyes, still watching him when he was not looking at her, showed varying emotions. Her lips trembled from time to time with unspoken words. Finally, reaching for the check and holding it in her hands, she felt the moment for final decisions had came.

"John—this means a trip for Nini and me."

He stopped and faced her. "You said the Doctor——"

"I was not quite honest with you. It was not the moment to discourage you further. The Doctor said"—she hesitated barely a moment—"that Nini must get away from here as soon as possible."

"Good God—she's ill?"

"No. She may be though if she's not built up. The Doctor said she should be taken to Switzerland. At present—it's only anemia. With invigorating air she will soon be strong. Without it"—she held out her hands significantly.

"If you had only told me this at first, Antonia!"

"I couldn't dear. It would have been too much for you to bear."

"You could bear it—why not I!" He shook himself with resolution. "The matter is settled. Don't let's mention it again." He picked up the check and held it out to her; then, quite suddenly, his face clouded. "Is it honest, Antonia? Am I worth that much to her?"

"Make yourself worth it. You can. You will. If we were differently placed, John—if we had no need of money—if we did not have Nini to consider—I might feel differently. I might even consider it absurd and fantastic, even a bit undignified—as you felt a little while ago. Nini makes everything different for us. She is our every thought—yours and mine. I think—I'm sure—I should do anything in the world that would promote her happiness, insure her the right sort of future. She is the greatest thing in our lives—yours and mine. If you and I were to speak frankly, we'd have to admit that she comes before ourselves—I mean before me with you—before you with me. I've read stories

and heard of women who have not hesitated to stoop to the lowest degradation to give their children the necessities of life. I am that sort of woman. . . . Of course, all this is rather intense for the moment." She shifted her voice into a lighter tone. "But—the chance has been given us to give Nini what she needs at the moment—and we cannot refuse it."

Hogarth's face was an amusing study in contradictions. "And this woman—this Mary Watson?"

"Help her. You can open up a new vista of life to her—and in doing it you will have actually done something worth while."

Hogarth was again pacing the floor. "Let's forget about her. Shall you leave soon?"

Antonia was not quite ready to dismiss the subject. "Before leaving, I want to call on her and invite her to dinner."

"That's useless. She wouldn't come. I told you she said she hated women."

"That doesn't make it necessary for me to be uncivil to her. Besides—I'm curious to know her."

"I don't want you to put yourself in a position to be insulted."

"Rudeness does not insult anyone. Besides, if you have to put up with her—why not I?"

The next morning Hogarth viewed the whole affair with a leavening sense of humor. Antonia's point of view, her casual acceptance of the *soi-disant* contract, and most of all the plans for the trip, had had an immensely lightening effect upon him. After all, if this wild Indian wanted his coaching in the effeteness of life, why shouldn't she have it? He

was ready and determined to do what she expected of him. Even irritation and resentment were crushed into the background. He was determined to push all that aside and meet her smiling and courteous; perhaps, in the end, this attitude might have some ameliorating effect upon her. He even dressed carefully, in preparation for the appointment, and left the villa whistling a jaunty air.

But their meeting tested all such decisions to the breaking point. She was in the garden, as the day before, and as perfectly dressed—lavender linen this time, a subtle shade that was exquisitely dainty and made her look very fresh and fragrant.

Hogarth held out his hand—a first step in new tactics. She received it and gave him a warm, pleasantly firm clasp.

"Didn't I tell you I'd win?"

He struggled with irritation and conquered. "How could you help winning? You told me you never failed."

"This time you made it very easy."

"I—how?"

"By letting me know the weak spot."

"Ah—always the heel of Achilles!"

It cost him more than she would ever know to respond in this light way. He handed her Antonia's invitation to dinner and chose a chair across the terrace from her. She opened the note, read it and, looking up, frowned; and the frown was extremely unpleasant.

"I don't want anything of this sort. You know I told you——"

"Still—if you are going to accept my judgment in

some matters—it would be useful for you to know the sort of woman I consider perfect. You see—if you did not find her at all what you admire—you would hardly think me any longer useful."

"It isn't the kind of woman you like that I want to know."

"That ought to give you a clue to everything else."

She thought over this a few moments and then said abruptly: "All right. Tell her I'll come."

"No—I shan't do that." He champed down on the bit and kept calm.

"What do you mean?"

"When one is courteous enough to ask a lady to dine with her, the lady invited should be courteous enough to respond in like manner."

She did not flush; only the color of her skin changed slightly. Hogarth thought it grew a bit paler. Her eyes, steadily meeting his, fairly gleamed; yet he stood his ground, slightly smiling and wearing an expression that was successfully casual and pleasant.

At last she shifted her glance and he experienced a thrill of satisfaction in realizing that he had achieved a first victory.

"All right. I'll write to her."

"Please don't think me rude and a bore," he hurried on, slightly contrite. "But good taste and good manners are so closely allied that one is almost impossible without the other." While saying this he subconsciously admitted to himself that it was rank hypocrisy. Taste and manners had absolutely

nothing to do with one another. "You do see that I meant no offense."

Her glance came back to him. "We won't get very far if we are going to get angry; will we? No—I don't mind—or if I did it doesn't matter. Rub it in as hard as you please. It's pretty satisfactory to pay somebody to tell you the truth. The people that get money out of you are the ones that lie most to you."

A silence followed this remark; in fact their conversation that morning was made up in great part of silences. She asked him to send her some books on Capri; she wanted to know something about it, something that would give her an idea of what he meant when he had said one should hear the voices of the place, the voices of the historical and mythological characters or aborigines or whatever he called them; not high-browed books—she was not strong on "deep" reading; in fact she wasn't fond of reading at all. He suggested that she should at least give two hours a day to books. Two hours—who ever heard of such a thing! Besides—didn't that advertisement in all the American magazines say that fifteen minutes a day spent in reading would educate anybody! That was an advertisement, Hogarth had answered lightly; but he would gladly bring her some books; he had rather a good library.

About noon, she rose and asked him to wait while she went into the hotel. When she returned she carried a note which she handed him with a slight smile. It was addressed to his wife.

"Then—to-morrow—at the same hour."

The next night she dined with them—in regal attire. One of those very formal, one might say stiff, and yet extremely distinguished black evening gowns which seem to emanate only from a certain *couturière* of the Rue de la Paix was worn with considerable appreciation of what it demanded; three strings of exquisitely matched pearls hung almost to her waist; several rings of very large diamonds were on her fingers; her hair was somewhat over dressed though glowing brilliantly. She was suitably got up for a court function and though each detail was perfect so far as expense and selection could make it, the effect in the simple surroundings of the villa was rather absurd.

Sitting between the two women, Hogarth got considerable pleasure and amusement out of the contrast. Antonia, very simply dressed in a frock several years old and wearing an antique necklace of marquisite, looked like a delicate, finely wrought jewel out of a cabinet. Her dark gray eyes, almost black in the candle light, always glowing with the fire of intellect which made them luminous, were filled with lurking amusement. She was always very keenly alive to comedy. Her hands, her gestures, the extraordinary quality of her delightfully modulated voice, her perfectly chosen words and, above all her easy courtesy—all appeared to Hogarth more striking than he had ever before realized. Each of her characteristics appeared to accentuate the rough edges of Mrs. Watson's traits. The two women were perfect foils. Yet he had to admit that the other woman was rather splendid in her way. Her resplendent health, her virility, her life force—as he

phrased it—made her terrifically—again his adjective—potent. The banal comparison of sunflower and orchid sprang into his thoughts.

He had wondered what the meeting would be like and when the gate bell tinkled and they awaited Mrs. Watson's entrance into the room, he found himself watching Antonia so closely that he was almost gauche in greeting their guest who, unexpectedly, spoke to him first. Antonia's greeting was quiet and simple and quite casual beside Mrs. Watson's somewhat stilted manner. Through the moments of greetings, the two women absorbed a wealth of detail in each other's appearance, though no one would have suspected Antonia of it as she indicated a place on the divan and sank down beside her guest. Her graceful lack of all self-consciousness very quickly disarmed Mrs. Watson and robbed her of much of her entrance importance.

The conversation went on facilely and, to Hogarth's relief, left him quite to one side. Perhaps this was Antonia's intention; perhaps Mrs. Watson's; at any rate he was given ample time to observe and compare. Though apparently giving her guest the right of way in choice of subjects, Antonia did nothing of the sort. She really led her along with extreme cleverness. She introduced and ended each subject with agility; and there was an undercurrent of flattery to their guest that made Hogarth gasp with astonishment. All this was a new side of Antonia to him. She did not let a chance escape to impress upon this dominant stranger that she was mistress in her own house; yet it was all

done so well that the stranger's attempt now and then to assert her own puissance failed.

And the way Antonia brought out expressions of opinion from her, opinions that would throw light on character! "Our little girl admires you so much. You made a great impression upon her the evening you arrived—on the boat with John. She always speaks of your lovely eyes. You must be fond of children. They are rarely attracted to those who are indifferent to them." Evidently the flattery had been leading in the direction of statement that was in reality question.

"I never knew any child well. Sometimes I think I'd like to have one—just to see what I could do with it."

"Do? In what way?"

"I didn't have any fun as a child. I'd like to give one everything under the sun it wanted. When I was a little girl I wanted fine clothes. It was a passion with me. And the other day, when I was in Paris, I was in one of those shops that make a specialty of children's clothes. I came very near going right out and adopting a child—just to dress it up in all those pretty things. Your kiddy would be a beauty in pretty things."

The last comment was left to pass unnoticed.

"Then you've thought of adopting a child?"

"Once or twice—yes. But I'm not ready yet."

And later, with a glance at her pearls. "You would have enjoyed seeing the pearls an Italian woman wore here last year. They had been in the family three hundred years. But I think yours

would have made her terribly envious—they are so perfectly matched."

"You like mine?" This with frank pleasure.

"They are quite wonderful."

"I only bought them last month—in Paris. When I showed them to a friend, she asked me why I had bought pearls—that any one could have them. I told her anybody might have them but I didn't know many that could pay a hundred and twenty thousand dollars for a string."

"What did she want you to buy?"

"Uncut emeralds."

"Ah."

And again: "Do you think you will like it here—enough to buy a villa?"

"I haven't decided yet."

"It *is* a bit remote."

"You like it?"

"Not for always. We have been here eight years now. John finds it a good place for writing. I should never advise any one to come here and settle permanently unless he had special work to do—or was very old. For an active person it might prove a bore."

"You find it tiresome?"

"I—no—but you see I am an old-fashioned woman. I am satisfied and happy wherever my husband is. I suppose that is heresy to the majority of American women of to-day."

"Well—we do think it's time to begin developing our own personality."

"Irrespective of being a wife and mother?"

"That's not for me to say—being neither. But I

do believe a man's success or failure depends upon his wife."

"His material or spiritual success?"

"What's the difference? You can't be happy unless you have the things you want."

"The things one wants are not always material."

"And the other things aren't worth much unless you have a lot of money to make life easy. I don't believe in love in an attic. I don't believe anybody does if they'd be honest about it. And I haven't yet found anything that money wouldn't buy."

After dinner, on the terrace, with the intense blue of the Italian night about them, Hogarth realized that Antonia was gradually withdrawing from the conversation. She was disposed to be a restrained talker, at times she was actually inarticulate, especcially when she found herself more closely in harmony with the scene about her than with those present. During dinner she had appeared much interested but now, under the stars and the translucent sky, with the shimmering sea, the gently trembling olive branches and the gentle night sounds about her, she slipped unobtrusively into aloofness. Hogarth knew so well her mood at such moments and forced himself to fill the place she had left vacant. But his efforts met with no response from Mrs. Watson; she was apparently interested in nothing he might have to say that evening; and in a few moments she rose to leave.

Their walk back to the hotel—Hogarth accompanied her—passed almost entirely without words.

"I won't expect you to-morrow," were her parting words. "I'll let you know when to come again."

Without offering her hand or a word of thanks for the evening, she turned and left him.

He found Antonia on the terrace when he got back to the villa. Without speaking, he lighted a cigarette and sat down and finished it before either of them spoke.

"Well," he said at last. "No comments, Antonia?"

She did not answer at once. It seemed as though her thoughts were so far away that it was difficult to bring them back to the present.

"She's interesting as a study," came her comment, in a low, serious voice.

"You don't like her?"

"No. But—somehow—I believe there's good in her."

"Where?"

"That's hard to say, John. You were right when you said she had escaped all civilizing influences. I believe, though, she is receptive."

"To what?"

"To the influence and opinions of some one she respected—and loved."

"Loved!" He laughed shortly. "Do you believe a woman like that capable of really loving?"

Antonia smiled. "John, dear, how little any of you men know about us. She is not only capable of loving; she has a wonderful capacity for it. She is perfectly the type that would have a *grande passion.*"

"A *grande passion* with her would be something terrific, I should say." He laughed easily. "Suppose she didn't have her way!"

Antonia nodded. "Yes—it would be rather ter-

rible—for her. It would mean so much to her; and there is so much she has to learn—in giving up."

"She'll never learn that."

"If she loves, she will."

"Is that said in bitterness, Antonia?"

"You know it isn't, John. It is the self-abnegation of love that makes it sublime."

A silence stretched between them, long, yet vibrant for both of them, with intense thoughts.

"One hundred and twenty thousand dollars for one of those strings of pearls! That's enough to make a Bolshevik of any one. Think of it! One of those strings would make us happy and comfortable for the rest of our lives—and give Nini everything!"

Antonia did not reply. Again her thoughts had sailed far away.

"What good do you think there is in her?"

"How can I tell, John, when a woman is neither wife nor mother. Given that, there is no limit to the height she might reach."

"Am I going to be able to help her in any way?"

"Yes—I'm sure you could help her very much." She said this with a certain new, definite note in her voice; and close upon her words she rose and came across to him and stood looking down at him. "Ever since she left, John, I have been thinking very deeply. Perhaps I counselled you badly. Perhaps, after all, you had better not go on with this contract—or whatever you call it—with her."

"You and Nini give up the trip—never!"

"Our going might cause harm—to her."

"What under the sun are you talking about?"

Antonia slipped down on the arm of the chair and held his hand between her two. "Please don't think I'm jealous—or foolish—or anything of the sort. You know how susceptible I am to intuitions. It may sound absurd to you—it is rather fantastic—but I feel perfectly certain that this woman is on the verge of falling in love with you."

He drew his hand away abruptly, as though offended. "That's the most insulting thing you've ever said to me, Antonia!"

"Insulting!"

"You know she is the vulgarest creature you ever came in contact with. In a way she's worse than a common man. No one would like being told he appealed to such a woman."

"But, John, dear, you represent everything she hasn't got—everything she wants. It's the most natural thing in the world."

"Soon you'll be saying she appeals to me."

"No, dear, I'll never say that—and just in that lies the tragedy for her. I am sincerely sorry for her. I am wondering if it is possible for you to go on seeing her without——" She stopped abruptly.

"Without ruining her life."

Hogarth burst into loud laughter.

"I'm just as capable of changing the currents of the Mediterranean as of making any impression on that woman's life. She's as hard as a rock. If she ever fell in love with a man it would be for the power he could give her." Then, rising, and with a yawn: "I'm at least glad you aren't worried about me."

Antonia smiled at him wistfully.

"What a boy you are! Don't you think I know what appeals to you—and what doesn't! I was only thinking of this poor woman without anything in the world but money. And she thinks it will buy everything!"

CHAPTER VI

HOGARTH turned away from the station at Naples, where he had gone to see his wife and child off on their northward journey, with an access of very deep depression. It was their first real separation since they had begun married life eight years before. And now Antonia was to be away from him three months! And Nini! Her intense little face, saddened at the moment of parting by a torrent of tears, touched him keenly. It was one of those moments in which he realized with deep insight what this little mite of his own flesh and blood meant to him. Everything. Antonia had been right when she had said that Nini came first. She did. And yet his adoration of her was made up in great part of sadness, yearning, an inexplicable emotion that touched the deeps of his being. Even from the beginning, when she was a tiny baby struggling for life, his love had been strangely tinged with this element of sadness. He seemed to know, from the first moment that he had heard her feeble little cry, her first gasp of life, that she was going to be the big part of his existence, the dominant factor and, just for that reason, the tragic element. All great love, according to his belief, was tinged with tragedy.

He spent an hour at the American Consulate, in conversation with the Consul, his closest friend in that part of the world; later he took a tram and

rode along the shore out to Posillipo; but still the hours hung depressingly heavy and endless about him. Each time he caught a glimpse of Capri, a sharp and precipitous outline on the placid sea, his thoughts shifted back to his little family, speeding steadily away from him.

When he got back to the villa late that evening, its silence and desertion struck him like a physical blow. It had the appearance, at least to him, of having been uninhabited for ages; its muteness suggested memories belonging to a distant past. He wandered about the rooms, vague and detached thoughts following him. He went out on the terrace at the moment when that ghostly hour—the first hour of the night—was in process of wrapping the world in darkness. It was neither evening nor night. Nature seemed hushed and still—dead. An infinite sadness was everywhere.

The tinkling gate bell sounded remote and from another world; even the maid, when she brought him a letter, appeared in some mysterious way to be of that strange world of dismal unrealities.

The letter was from Mrs. Watson. "Come and dine with me to-night at half past eight." He welcomed the invitation with unusual eagerness. Anything to escape the depressing effect of this house bereft of his beloved!

He was shown up to an apartment on the second floor of the hotel, bare rooms without any touch to relieve the dreariness of hotel furnishings. A table, placed near open windows, was set for two.

Mrs. Watson, in trailing white, a sumptuous tea gown of laces and embroideries, held out her hand

in a manner, for her, strikingly gracious. "I'm glad I found you. The *portière* said you had returned on the evening boat."

"You may be sure everything one does in Capri is immediately known by every one."

"Will they know that you are dining with me in my rooms the first night of your wife's absence?"

Hogarth thought there was a malicious gleam in her eyes as she put the question.

"Everyone knows it now," he answered quietly.

"What do you think of my room?" She waved her hand towards the hideous plush furniture, lace curtains and cheap prints—that impossible taste of forty years gone. "Do you find it expresses me?" The question was put with a suggestion of humor.

"It doesn't express anyone. That's the main difficulty."

"That lifts a load off my chest. I was sure you were going to find it characteristic of me."

"In a way, I do."

This caught her unprepared. Her eyes flashed surprise. "What do you mean by that?"

"You've been in this room—let me see—more than a week; and it's just the same. You haven't done a thing to it."

"What could I do? Refurnish it?"

"At least you might have had those frightful prints taken down. And haven't you some small personal things with you, a bit of brocade, a favorite picture or two, a piece of old lace, tea things, a——"

"No. I haven't anything like that with me."

He let a moment of silence show his surprise. "You don't travel very comfortably."

"You call lugging a lot of junk around with you being comfortable!"

"Beautiful things that give pleasure are never troublesome. They are the most useful things in the world—the most necessary. They make existence charming." He turned away and walked to the open window and leaned out. The night was much too beautiful to be shut out by a dreary hotel room.

She looked with a new expression, one that suggested somehow helplessness, about the room. "I met a woman in Paris who had her hotel room done that way. She said she had picked up the things traveling about and always carried them with her. Is that what you mean?"

Hogarth nodded, still looking out into the night. His thoughts had again flashed far away. They must be at Rome now, waiting for the train that would carry them on to Milan!

"Can I get them in Capri?"

He forced himself to turn back. How he wished he hadn't come! The empty villa was much better than this.

"Get what?" he asked, puzzled.

"Things to put in this room."

He drew his brows together, a trick that meant, to one that knew him well, impatience. "My dear lady, you must not buy them *en bloc*. You must do it gradually. Each thing must mean something, have some significance, hold some memory of people, events, emotions. If you get everything at once—they might as well belong to anyone."

"That's all very well for somebody who has been at it a long time. I'm getting started late. I've got to make up for lost time. What can I buy here?"

"Post cards, horrible water colors and bead bags—all the things you probably had in your California house—and which you are not going to have here, if I can help it."

She looked at him, amusement struggling with anger. Finally, she laughed. "My—but you're cross to-night. Do you always act this way when your wife goes away?"

"My wife has never been away before."

She rose. "Perhaps you're hungry. Nothing makes a man so cross as an empty stomach. Suppose we have dinner."

Hogarth made a quick decision. He felt that he could not remain much longer in the stuffy room and be polite. "I wonder if you would mind going to dinner with me to-night—outside—at a little restaurant. We'd have a much better dinner than here—and we could enjoy the night. I should think you'd smother in here."

"I'd love it."

She went into the next room and soon returned with a voluminous wrap about her; and without further speech they went down the stairs and out to the street. Hogarth led the way, only a short distance, to the Café Morgano, where he chose a table on the terrace under grapevines. Without consulting her, he ordered the dishes which he knew would be prepared well, and sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief.

"Now—isn't this much better?"

She nodded, evidently pleased. "It's just for things like this that men are useful. A woman can't do this sort of thing by herself. I didn't hear you order any champagne. I ordered some iced at the hotel."

"They only have Aste Spumante here. Do you like that?"

"I've never tasted it—but let's try it."

Hogarth was rather amused as he watched her drink the champagne. She did not sip it; in fact, she did nothing in a half-hearted way; every gesture, every movement, even every decision appeared to be carried out with a sort of energetic deliberateness. He found it very much in character for her to lift the first glass to her lips and drain it at once. Her expression, as she put the glass down, was one of mild contempt for the sweet flavor. And so far as any effect was visible from the five or six glasses she drank, he saw none. Her color may have been a bit heightened, her voice was a shade louder and more emphatic, but there was not the slightest lessening of self control.

She was not long in returning to the subject of objets d'art. "If there are only post cards here what am I going to do about finding things for my room? Are you going to find them for me?"

"That is not at all the idea. You must select the things yourself."

"Nonsense! I don't pretend to know."

"I thought you wanted to learn."

"I suppose I do; but it'll take time."

"You might as well begin at once. There are good antiquity shops in Naples."

"All right. Let's go there to-morrow."

Hogarth felt that a distinct advance had been made in their relations that night. He could hardly define it precisely and thought of it long after he had returned to the deserted villa. In writing to Antonia of the evening he tried to make his descriptions amusing and failed. It had been his intention to give her the impression that he had enjoyed himself; but the letter told all too plainly that he had been tremendously bored.

The next day in Naples was not much better. It was something of a pilgrimage from one antiquity shop to another, and in each place Mrs. Watson's taste showed itself unfailingly bad. Hogarth did get some amusement out of watching her go directly up to something that was obviously imitation or entirely modern and buy it at once. In most cases she would eventually accept his suggestions, after he had taken the pains and exerted infinite patience in explaining to her why such things were considered good; but she positively refused to let him persuade her into the purchase of several old vestments which, though of exquisite materials, were pretty well gone to pieces. "It's all very well to say those rags are wonderful—but I've got to have some respect for my health. If I hung those things in my room I'd have small-pox or leprosy in a week."

They lunched, at his suggestion, at a small restaurant on the waterfront; and again he watched her drink a bountiful quantity of wine. They parted at her hotel in Capri and he was surprised to hear her say that she had enjoyed the day very much.

The weeks began to pass, for Hogarth, placidly. He saw her almost every day—at least whenever she sent her peremptory order for him to come to the hotel. He never sought an appointment himself. The idea of purchasing a villa was not mentioned again; and as the June days followed one another in balmy indolence, she appeared quietly content with the meager diversion offered.

In his letters to Antonia, Hogarth tried to maintain a consistently gay note. He did not want the least suggestion to creep in that what he was going through demanded any sacrifice on his part. In moments of utter boredom he confessed to himself that it *was* sacrifice—real abnegation; at others, when the material pleasures she furnished so lavishly had satisfied his sensual longings, he admitted that on the whole the dull summer days were passing fairly agreeably.

"She appears to have settled here permanently," he wrote. "She has taken an entire floor at the hotel and was determined to make me arrange it for her. We had a test of wills and I won. I'm making her do it herself. It is the only way for her to learn to appreciate good things. We have been to Naples several times and I am trying very hard to make her think before she buys and understand what she is seeing. It's pretty much up-hill work and repetition has lessened the original amusement I got out of it. In the meantime the antiquity shops of Naples are being rapidly sacked. I had to charter a large sail boat to bring over one day's purchases. . . .

"I must confess she is an interesting study. She

has such amazing sides. Lately we have been swimming in the morning. She is quite fearless and expert and will swim to any point I suggest. Her strength and wind are inexhaustible. You should see her in bathing dress—dark red and tremendously becoming. The other day, when we had swum out to that ledge of rocks under Anacapri—you know, near the Blue Grotto—and climbed up to rest a while, she slipped off her skirt and lay basking in the sun in the tight-fitting undersuit. With her cap off and her hair falling about her, her extremely well-formed arms and legs, her radiant skin, her vivid color—she made an extraordinary picture, amazingly natural and unconscious of self. It was really her true milieu. She was so perfectly a part of the elements—of water and air and heat—that she appeared to belong to no period and particularly to nothing of to-day. She had the aloofness of a Greek statue, a sort of goddess of complete freedom, of passionate, unchained forces. Several times I have found myself thinking of her in big adjectives. Superb seems to fit her best. But always, when I become enthusiastic over her extraordinary virility, I see her hands—and then all admiration vanishes. Did you notice them? They are really repulsive—thick and heavy, without sensitiveness, without gentleness, without any feeling. Sometimes I wonder if her fingers have any sense of touch in them. They are so unconsciously cruel. I am sure they could do horribly cruel things and never know it. . . .

"You ask what our conversations are about. Well—they are mostly questions, put by her. She has a tremendous avidity for knowledge—in certain

directions; and I fancy she has got all the information she possesses in this way. She finds it much easier to acquire information by asking questions than in reading. She positively refuses to read anything except very light novels. I have given her stacks of books and tried vainly to make her read them. She said quite ingenuously the other day that she would much rather have me tell her what was in them—that she would remember better that way; and I must admit her memory is extraordinary. . . .

"She doesn't give a hang for conventions; says no one knows her here and that it doesn't matter anyway what people say. Isn't that typical of traveling Americans? Isn't it exactly what creates the unfortunate reputation we have among Europeans? For instance, the other day she saw Piglione's smart yacht sailing about here and was immediately fired with the idea of renting it. Nothing would appease her until I had gone over to Naples and asked him to rent it to her for a month. He scoffed at the proposition until I told him the price made no difference; then he put a staggering figure which she accepted. The result is that the yacht is now anchored off the Grande Marina awaiting her pleasure, completely manned and with the best chef in Naples aboard. Her plan now is to cruise about the Sorrento peninsula, spend a few days at Amalfi, Pæstum, and perhaps go on to Sicily And mind you, she had planned for me to accompany her, entirely alone, without even the English companion whom she finds—and I agree with her there—a frightful bore. Of course I told her it

wouldn't do; that I minded even if she didn't. She retorted that she had never before heard of a man insisting upon a chaperone. However, I gained my point and saved my own reputation—if not hers. The companion goes with us. . . .

"You can imagine what people are saying here. Old Mrs. Stevens came to see me the other day and said she was going to write to you to come back at once—otherwise you wouldn't find me here when you returned. I have thought a great deal about the idea you put into my head—and find it entirely without foundation. She only cares for what I can do for her. She admits herself that a man is necessary to have around to arrange things for one. Her attitude towards me is rather patronizing—due, I'm sure, to the fact that I have no money and am therefore negligible—which is her sole measure of value. I let this pass and console myself in getting a certain pleasure out of imposing my opinions upon her—which she is beginning to accept. On the whole, our companionship is rather one of comradeship and good fellowship—always quite impersonal. She is a good sport and though contemptuous of the lack of luxuries that exists here does not let it interfere with her pleasure. I have often tried to define what my feeling exactly for her is. I think, on the whole, that I should say it was something like the feeling of companionship that men have together. I often have to check myself to keep from treating her exactly as though she were a man—not that I think she would notice the difference. I'm sure she has never had any close association with gentlemen. She has very little of the softness and feminine allure of

women—none of their fascinating dependence. And yet she is tremendously female—in the primitive sense. . . .

"If my letters do not arrive regularly, don't be alarmed, as the next week or two may be spent on the yacht. What a wonderful trip it would be if you and Nini were along; but no, that wouldn't do, you couldn't possibly stand her. Sometimes I wonder how much longer I can."

The day before the yachting trip began, Hogarth received a letter from Antonia that sent him off with a very light heart. Her descriptions of the life they were leading were full of glowing happiness. Both were well and Nini was growing more robust every moment. The tone of the letter made Hogarth recklessly contented. He let himself go on a current of well being that showed itself in his personality. He was a gay, clever, amusing companion when in his normal mood; and now that he was convinced that everything had turned out so well—if even for only a few months—he was his old self again.

The yacht, on the return from Sicily, had anchored off Pæstum. The day had been very hot. The sun had seemed determined to burn itself relentlessly across both land and sea. Evening, however, had brought some relief; a gracious breeze had sprung up, timid but refreshing; and the surface of the water was scintillating with tiny ripples that whispered of a cool night.

Hogarth and Mrs. Watson had finished dinner and

were sitting at the stern of the yacht. A white clad servant had just removed the coffee cups, brought a tray of liqueurs and again left them alone. The life-giving breeze touched them gently. The three Greek temples, ghostly in the deep blue night, appeared to smile at them from the nearby shore; the mountains of the Sorrento peninsula were fast fading away into the evening haze.

Hogarth lounged in a willow chair, physically comfortable, mentally lax. He had enjoyed the voyage immensely. He loved the places they had visited and though he had seen them before, this second visit, with every detail made as comfortable as unlimited money could, had been stimulating to him. It was wonderful to have any amount of time at one's disposal, no trains to be caught at improbable hours, no bad inns to be endured for what was to be seen the next day, no watching of expenses to make sure that one did not go beyond carefully calculated amounts. It had all reacted on him in an obviously physical way. He felt intensely well and strong and on good terms with the world—and showed it in his intensified virility and handsome face.

Mrs. Watson, in a chair near him, was quiet too but not so wholly content. Her eyes were continually moving about, restless, glowing, and at times passionately afire. The shore line and the sea held them now and then; most often they were eagerly bent upon Hogarth's face. The voyage had left deep tan on her skin; in the evening light her face appeared more flushed than usual—this due in some measure to the quantity of champagne she had

drunk at dinner; the light breeze had blown her hair more softly about her brow; and her dress, low and showing the fullness of her soft neck and a suggestion of her deep bosom, gave an appearance of abandon to her that was vastly becoming.

Suddenly catching Hogarth's eyes she held them a long time. Then, rising, she came and stood before him and looked down at him intently. Finally, shifting her glance, she moved slowly, irresolutely to the side of his chair so that he no longer saw her face and, in doing so, let her hand touch his hair very gently. He started from the contact of her warm touch and made a movement to rise. She withdrew her hand quickly at his movement; then, seeing him settle back again in the chair, laid it firmly on his shoulder and held it there.

"You know what's the matter with me—don't you?"

He remained very still. "Is anything?" Then, receiving no response: "Has something gone wrong?"

"To-morrow—we'll be back in Capri."

An unfamiliar note in her voice chained his attention. It sounded strangely vibrant and yet softer than he had ever heard it.

"Are you sorry the trip is over?" He tried to speak lightly.

"Are you?"

"I've enjoyed it immensely—every bit of it."

"So have I. I believe," she paused a moment as if considering her words. "I believe it has been the happiest time I ever had." Her hand tightened on his shoulder until it was almost a grasp. "You

know," she broke out suddenly, as though having reached the limit of self control, "it's a rotten shame you're married!"

Hogarth sprang up this time and shook off her hold. Antonia's suggestion flashed before him with blinding force. He turned angrily towards Mrs. Watson and found her eyes blazing upon him.

All restraint had been cast aside now. She faced him in complete abandon of violent, primitive passion.

"I love you! Oh—don't pretend you don't know it! I've loved you since the first moment I saw you! If you get a divorce I'll marry you!"

CHAPTER VII

WHEN the yacht dropped anchor off the Grande Marina, Capri was still a vague body in the morning mists. Hogarth, impatiently pacing the deck, finally caught sight of a small fishing boat, hailed it, let himself swiftly down by means of a cable and sprang aboard. Five minutes later, with feet firmly planted once more on ground, he shook himself as if to throw off some distasteful burden and set off rapidly up the hill.

As he approached his villa, he was surprised to find the windows of the upper floor open. The orange colored awning was also spread across the terrace. The house appeared occupied. Yet he had not sent word to the servants to expect him.

He unlocked the gate, rushed into the house, ran upstairs and found Antonia in her room, still in bed.

"You here!" he exclaimed, gathering her in his arms and covering her face with kisses. "I'm so glad. You can't imagine how happy I am! But why back so soon? And Nini?"

Antonia struggled with heavy lids and pointed with a gesture cautioning silence towards the open door of the adjoining room. "She is in there—still asleep." She slipped out of bed, threw on a dressing gown and closed the door. "Yes—she's quite all right. Quite strong again. And you—John?"

Without answering, he opened the door she had closed and entered the room. The little girl was

sleeping peacefully, rosier and fatter than he had ever seen her. His heart gave a bound of joy. Leaning over the bed, he kissed very tenderly the little hand that lay on the coverlet.

"Oh, I'm all right," he said, back in Antonia's room. Then, quite unexpectedly, a wave of utter weariness swept over him and he sank down in a chair with a sigh of relaxation.

Antonia, occupied with her hair before the mirror, did not see his expression. For a few moments he sat gazing at her out of a stupor.

"You haven't said you approved, John." Her back was still towards him.

"Approved!—of what, dear?"

"Our unexpected arrival."

"Doesn't my joy show approval?"

She considered this. "Perhaps. But I'd like most awfully to hear you say you think I did the right thing."

He stirred uneasily. "Was there any reason for the sudden decision?"

She nodded, still looking in the mirror. "A very grave one."

He started. "Grave!"

She smiled. "Your last letter—before you went on the yachting excursion."

"I've written you many since."

"I never received them."

"Not one? I wrote you almost every day."

She crossed to him and gave him a light kiss. "I'm so glad. But they never reached me."

"I gave them to the steward to mail. Surely——"

"All of them?"

He nodded, reflective. "Yes—every one. You see, I wrote them on the yacht in the evening. Confound that fellow! I'll bet he pocketed the money I gave him for stamps."

"John, dear, I might as well confess it—I'm tremendously relieved."

"At what?"

She pretended to give a great deal of attention to a recalcitrant hook. "An indefinite amount of time on a yacht with a lady of such dominant personality—everything in her favor—surroundings, inaction, my absence, Mediterranean sea——" she completed the description with a comprehensive gesture. "I thought I had better be returning to look after my own interests." She ended with a light laugh.

"Not sure of me yet, Antonia?"

"Sure of you, yes, John—but by no means sure of the lady. She is too dominant for anyone to withstand long. At times I was really rather frightened—when I thought of her influencing you—leading you almost anywhere—even without your knowing it yourself."

His brows drew together in a frown of displeasure. "A charming picture you paint of me. Why not call me a sop and be done with it!"

"Because you aren't, dear." She meant to continue laughing, she wanted to—his anger was so boyish—but sensitiveness held her back. "But you know yourself you are not exactly a dominating personality. You are too delightful a person to be that. No one would ever compare you to a marble of Michael Angelo—as you did her; you are rather more one of those fine bronzes of the Greeks—one

in which the workmanship is very delicate and sensitive." She shifted the subject quickly. "As a matter of fact—you are quite the color of bronze to-day. I've never seen you have such a coat of tan. Were you on deck all the time?"

He did not respond to her lighter tone. Somehow, in the depths of his consciousness, she had touched a nerve that vibrated painfully. He rose with sudden determination.

Antonia turned towards him. "Where are you going?"

"To freshen up a bit—have a bath. Let's breakfast on the terrace."

"Do I have to wait all that time to hear about the yachting expedition?"

"It will keep a few moments."

With arms about him, she detained him. He was not quite himself; his mood was unfamiliar to her. "You are sure you are glad we are back, John?"

"For myself—I'm delighted. Was it really fear of what might happen to me that brought you back?"

"Not altogether. It was really more homesickness for you. I couldn't stop away any longer."

In his room, he threw off his clothes impatiently and plunged into a cold bath. He felt that he must remove everything, even physically, that recalled the previous night. Memory of it was still throbbing vividly. Mrs. Watson's expression, as he had turned roughly away from her, still colored every thought; its violence, its unrestrained, torrential passion still held him in the grip of deep disgust. He had never imagined anything to equal her eyes as he had seen them for, he hoped, the last time. Yes,

it was surely the last time; he was determined upon that. All the refined sensitiveness of his nature had burst forth in overwhelming contempt, even horror, and beyond this contempt was very deep resentment that he had been party to the action and in reality the cause of the scene. His life had been singularly free from anything of the sort. He had had the average man's experience with women—he had been in no sense a celibate—but his relations with them had always been tempered by his attitude of sympathy and gentleness and courtesy—an attitude which had had much to do with disguising what otherwise might at times have been sordid. It was one of his most sincerely felt beliefs that any woman, no matter how low she might have fallen, should be treated with courtesy. To find a woman who deliberately threw all such beliefs into the scrap heap and acknowledged, even cried aloud, that she cared nothing for all such sensitiveness, created in him an actual physical sensation of nausea.

From the first day he had met her, and beneath his attempt to look upon her as what he termed an amusing, fantastic type, had lurked the suspicion of something brutal. He recalled now the feeling that had once or twice come to him—when he had caught an expression of displeasure in her eyes—of standing on the brink of a chasm that held something hideous. He had now looked into the chasm and seen the revolting expression of unchained passion. Divorce his wife—his perfect Antonia—and marry this cave creature! He tried to laugh at the idea but disgust kept him rigidly silent. The amazing

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vulgarity of speaking such words, even if she had thought them, was unbelievable. It was worthy of a scene in a brothel.

Immediately afterwards he had shut himself in the cabin and locked the door. He was not at all sure that she would not follow him there and hurl more of her obscene remarks at him. Thinking over the details of every conversation they had had since meeting, certain inferences sprang into relentless clarity, inferences which he had laughed at or dismissed casually. Her unrestrained consumption of wine—usually champagne—was one of her most amazing habits which he explained as being a primitive trait that demanded something that would calm—or deaden?—her exuberant vitality. Her treatment of her companion was nothing short of savagery. Her orders, rather commands, were given in a loud, irritable voice that made him think of some ancient Pharaoh speaking to Nubian slaves; her manner to employees of the hotel was crudely insulting; her fury—it could be called nothing else—at any miscarried order was embarrassing to everyone present. Her personal preferences, her love of elaborate clothes, her use of almost overpowering scent;—all showed uncivilized tendencies. Her belief that she could dominate, really dictate, in any directions her desires led her appeared to be her most absorbing obsession. That she had reached the conclusion that this domination would reach to and include him and his wife had been blindingly flashed upon Hogarth the evening before.

This realization had left him in a state of furious, resentful excitement. All during the night he had

fairly throbbed with hatred and disgust; and contempt for himself had not been an unimportant ingredient of his excitement. He saw himself as a fool, stupid beyond belief, pitiably weak. He might have known she had been leading up to something of the sort. Only his desperate need to give his wife and child the much needed trip had kept him blinded. This admission increased self contempt. His utter failure to provide for his wife and child had led him into this despicable position. As he viewed it now, no man could have sunk lower; none could be less worthy of respect. He saw himself as a man who had forfeited all sense of honor, all convictions, all pride.

The cold bath brought no refreshing outlook. Facing Antonia at breakfast appeared to him now as being unbearable. He felt subtly that he had besmirched her by being the cause of her name having been dragged into the mire. He fought this latter depression, however, and appeared on the terrace, breakfasted and, due to the presence of his daughter, postponed any discussion of the matter. But as the time approached when Antonia would inevitably broach the subject and ask for details, his dread of discussing it with her increased. What could he tell her? Nothing was further from his intention than to give her a frank, bald statement of what had happened. It was bad enough for his mind to be filled with such memories; to know that she was aware of them would be unbearable. He also actually feared for Antonia to know. He feared its effect upon her in relation to him. Intuition counselled him that her feminine instinct would lead her

to believe that he had been cognizant of what was coming. She herself had been, had mentioned it to him, had even, in a way, prepared him for it. Could he ever convince her that it had come as an overwhelming surprise? He put himself in the place of an onlooker. No one would have believed it possible for a fairly intelligent man to have been unprepared as he had been. The situation was vastly complicated; it grew more so as his thoughts dwelt upon it.

When Nini, gay and flushed with the excitement of returning home, had climbed over the terrace wall to a neighbor's garden—to tell her impressions of the great world to the children there—Hogarth knew the moment had come. Antonia's eyes, smiling and yet a bit puzzled, were full of questions.

"Something's not quite right, John," she said with a hesitancy almost equaling his own. "It isn't our unexpected return; is it?"

His expression was full of reproach. "Antonia—please."

"Yes, dear, but you aren't a bit cheerful. Don't you care to tell me what's wrong? " She smiled whimsically. "Has two months without me made you independent of the need of confiding?"

With a supreme effort he held himself under control. He would have liked nothing better at that moment than to have poured out the whole of his disgust for what had happened and receive her sympathetic understanding. But her eyes, so sweet, so absolutely pure, so finely noble, must be spared knowledge that would cloud their clarity. She

knew nothing of the mires of life; he prayed that she never would.

Under the influence of such determination, he felt the need of some physical gesture that would end the struggle. He put his hand across his eyes and held it there.

"I'm tired, Antonia, desperately tired."

"John—you are not well?"

"Oh, yes—I'm well enough—only——"

"What, dear?"

"The whole thing." Again he called upon his forces and checked what was dangerously near capitulation; he even managed a smile, a twisted, bitter expression devoid of all mirth. Suddenly he pushed back his chair and stood up.

"Antonia—would you mind very much if we don't talk about that trip just yet? I feel I'd like to rid my mind of it for a little while. Tell me more of your experience. Tell me everything. Give me some of the freshness of the mountain air you have been breathing. You don't know how desperately I need it."

"Desperately?"

"I'm exaggerating, of course. But please—please talk about yourself and Nini. I'm longing for details. Nini seems to have enjoyed every minute of the trip."

Alert to some urgent need in him for a change of subject, she gave herself up to recountal though, all the time, through her description, she was seeking some explanation of his strange manner. She accepted his admittance of fatigue as reasonable. He had not had a change of climate for several

years and the past two months of heat had no doubt been exhausting, especially Sicily with its relaxing air. But beneath this explanation lurked a slight alarm. He *was* different. She had never seen him quite this way before. His eyes did not meet hers frankly, they had a new way of avoiding hers; even his caresses had been a bit—perhaps quite—perfunctory. The beginning of her first day at home was a failure. It left her depressed; it robbed the joy of homecoming of its zest.

After luncheon, Hogarth suggested that his daughter take a long walk with him; he thought of going up to Anacapri; the climb and the exercise, he hoped, would divert him; and Nini, with her childish prattle—he always found her a delightful companion, interested in everything—would scout introspective moods.

Antonia went with them to the gate. He had not suggested that she accompany them; and she had not mentioned it. She watched them until they had disappeared at a turn in the path; then, unaccountably weary, she sank down on a stone bench. Her eyes filled with dark shadows. Something was wrong; and for the first time in eight years he had appeared unwilling to tell her. Was this the effect of that woman? Had she already done something, said something, that had influenced him strangely? Loyalty and deep confidence made her refute the suggestion. Again, a feeling of depressing weariness was upon her. Ah—it was the heat! The doctor had told her she was running a risk in returning too soon. She got up, hurried into the house

and sank down on the divan. Dizziness and blurred vision were now added to depressing fatigue.

Hogarth and the little girl tramped steadily along the winding road that leads to that part of the island where green pastures give an entirely different aspect to the landscape. High on the upper plateau the sea was entirely left behind; the bare, dramatic formation of the lower island gradually changed into smiling, gentle fields; trees, grass, the greenness of pasture lands presented restful relief to the eyes; Italian character almost entirely disappeared; they might have been in some land of northern softness.

The little girl was full of childish descriptions of her trip and compared what she was seeing with what she had seen in Switzerland. The goats had been so different and had bells tied about their necks. Why didn't goats in Italy have bells? And the little cottages they had passed on the mountain roads were so pretty and clean—and the people in them were so rosy. Why didn't Italians have rosy cheeks? And why were there so many big hotels in Switzerland while in Capri they were not big at all? It was so much colder too; at night it was just like Capri in the winter.

"Next time you must go with us, Papino. It will be so much more fun with you there."

"I *will* go next time. I'm never going to let you go again without me."

"Goody—goody—Papino! Let's go to-morrow. It's more fun there. There are heaps more ways of playing there than here."

The afternoon passed quickly for Hogarth—and pleasantly, but as their homeward journey was be-

gun in the freshness of oncoming evening, the shadows that crept slowly across the sea reached his thoughts and colored them. He had come out to clear his mind and reach some decision; neither seemed to have been achieved. He still had to face Antonia with disordered thoughts. He needed more time, a great deal of time, before he would feel entirely himself again, before he could reach some decision with regard to the immediate future. The only thing definitely decided upon was not to see Mrs. Watson again. But if she remained there, and he too, how was this to be managed! Meeting was almost inevitable.

His steps lagged as he came down into Capri and, with unconfessed desire to prolong his absence from home, he led the way towards the terrace which forms a part of the town piazza and waited there to see the funicula arrive with passengers from the evening boat. This furnished excitement for Nini; for him it meant a moment more of distraction.

He scanned the faces of the arrivals as they stopped from the funicula. Suddenly his face lighted up with recognition. And with this recognition came quick decision. He stepped forward and greeted his friend from Naples, the American Consul.

"Are you over for a day or two?" Hogarth asked.

"Only for the evening. We are returning to-night in a launch."

"Can you dine with us?"

"Sorry, old man—I'm here with three men—Americans. I'll have to stick by them. How are you? Everything going well? And the new book?"

Hogarth's face contracted. His friend, seeing the expression, slipped his arm through Hogarth's and led him a little to one side. "Look here, old fellow, you know I said you could always call on me if you needed help. You look down on your luck."

"I am."

"Well—what can I do to help?"

Hogarth glanced away with quiet resolution. "I've just about come to the conclusion that I'd better give up writing. They don't want what I write. I'm going to try something else."

"What?"

"Anything—for the moment. I think my idea is—it's still a bit chaotic—but I think I had better plan to make enough money to go back home. I've been away too long."

The Consul turned and motioned to the two men who were awaiting him. "Come over here. I've found the very man for you. Hogarth speaks Italian backwards."

The encounter ended with Hogarth's sending Nini home with some friends who were passing at the moment and his going to dinner with the three men.

About eleven o'clock that night he burst into the villa with a strangely different face from the one Antonia remembered from the morning. The happiness that emanated from him, however, vanished suddenly when he found Antonia lying on the divan with a wet cloth across her eyes. He knelt down beside her anxiously.

"What is the matter, dearest?"

She removed the cloth, sat up and smiled at him. "Nothing—a slight headache. I think this sudden

return to heat went to my head. You have some good news."

The most unexpected thing had happened; the Consul's friends had offered him a position as special representative of their company in Naples; they were arranging some big business contract and had been looking for a man in whom they could have implicit confidence; they had appeared as delighted as he. "At least it's a man's job," he ended, as Antonia met his outburst with silent consideration.

"It means your being away," she said quietly.

"Only during the day. I'll take the morning boat and return on the evening one—the real American commuting idea. It's a Godsend, Antonia."

"And your writing?"

"I've decided to let that go for a while. Please look at it as I do. It's just what I need at this moment. Now—I'll go pack my bag. They want me to go back with them to-night. I'll stop over a day or two with them so as to find out exactly what they want me to do."

"But John—I've just come home. We've been separated two months."

He kissed her, this time lightly, even carelessly, and ran upstairs whistling gaily.

When she put out the lights that night and stood at the window looking out into the night, her heart was troubled. He *was* different. Something surely had happened to him—something which he had not cared to tell her.

CHAPTER VIII

ANTONIA felt no better the next morning. When she opened her eyes and looked out through wide-open windows to the blazing light on the sea, she realized that she had made a mistake in returning so soon. The contrast between bracing Switzerland and relaxing Italy had been too much for her. She felt feverish and restless; her hands were parched and hot.

She made an effort to get out of bed and struggled into a thin dress. Coffee stimulated her somewhat and by the time Nini had been dressed and got off to spend the day with some children, she felt slightly better. A great deal had to be done; indisposition must be conquered.

The voices of the two servants, singing as they worked, reached her pleasantly. How good and kind they were—and how capable! Already they had begun cleaning the house of its accumulation of summer's dust. And yet—one of them must be dismissed; that was one of the decisions Antonia had reached during the long, lonely night she had just passed. She must reduce expenses in every way. She was sure that was the real basis of John's abstraction. He was always a bit out of sorts whenever funds were running low; and all during the past year things had gone from bad to worse. He had admitted to her—at least she had dragged it from him—that they had just enough in the bank

to carry them through six months; after that he did not know what he was going to do. This was before Mrs. Watson had appeared and forced her generous offer upon him. That had been like a gift from heaven—and in Antonia's heart was nothing but appreciation. She had crushed criticism into the background. Generosity was a big enough trait to make one overlook any amount of bad taste and vulgarity.

The problem of making ends meet always brought to Antonia questions as to her influence upon Hogarth. Had she been the right inspiration to him? Had she not changed what might otherwise have been, so far as the world went, a successful career? He *had* made a success without her; with her as a helpmate he had failed. Though he had never given her the slightest reason for thinking that he felt she had steered him into the wrong course, she often wondered if he did not feel this way about it. Such questions brought lessening of assurance to her, doubts of her own purpose, uncertainty as to her own determination to live up to the ideals she believed in. Ideals and the actual living of life clashed so! Without their little girl they might have gone on indefinitely, pinching and saving and living from hand to mouth until the gods had smiled and recognized worth. She knew they would eventually; they always did. But with a child, was that sort of existence possible—was it fair to the child? Children must have the best that could be obtained; they must have physical comforts and care that could be dispensed with by adults; they must have change of air, special food, a thousand little things that

increased expenses. Without such things physical weakness might unfit them for life. Their little girl was far from strong. The summer had done a great deal for her, but the doctor in Switzerland had said it was absolutely necessary for her to return next year; she must be carefully watched and tended if she were to grow into a robust woman. Well—next summer—suppose they could not afford the trip!

Antonia questioned her own place in the circle of their three lives. Ought she to modify her influence upon John? She had become a great influence in his life; she was perfectly aware of it herself and was sometimes frightened by it. He accepted so much from her without question. At times he made her feel that he was still very young, so much younger than she, and had not yet arrived at the point where convictions become character. Suppose she were to decide to withdraw her opposition to his writing what she considered "cheap" work; suppose she even went so far as to suggest to him to write the sort of thing that had made his original success? He *could* do it—so why not? Hundreds of others did and reaped the benefit. If the twentieth century was not a period of appreciation for the best in art, why try to live above and beyond one's period? Perhaps she had been too *exigeante,* too difficult, too *précieuse.* It had taken her child and life to open her eyes. She had chosen the wrong road; and she had pulled John along with her down this mistaken path. Ah, well—she would tell him so! She would admit her failure—which had caused his. They were still young enough, strong enough, hopeful enough to retrace their steps and find once more

the beaten path. She would smile upon it when she reached it, grateful and appreciative of the peace it offered.

Emilia, the maid, broke in upon her thoughts by bringing her a note. She recognized Mrs. Watson's handwriting and hesitated to open the envelope until she had made sure it was intended for her. Several lines drawn under the Mrs. eliminated all doubt on this point.

"Can you meet me on the Tragara this morning? I will be there about noon. Don't bother about answering—just come."

Antonia returned the note to the envelope and without conscious intention slipped it into a book that lay on the table.

The first effect of the note was a slight jar upon her mood; quick upon this came swift, increasing doubts. She hesitated. Should she ignore this command—it was quite frankly that—or should she, during her husband's absence, feel it an obligation to take his place and respond to this woman's beck and call? What could Mrs. Watson want with her? Had she heard of John's sudden departure and would now demand explanations of it?

She glanced out of the window. The light was so blazing, the heat so intense, that she felt it almost an impossibility to move out of the house—especially when the object might be to face irritation and recriminations. Gradually, as her hesitation increased, the idea began to grow upon her that there might be some connection between the note and John's departure. Perhaps Mrs. Watson was going to tell her that the arrangement between them

had been ended, that she no longer desired John's services. The first reaction to this idea was one of relief. The mortification of seeing John's taste, his personality, his charm actually sold for this woman's purposes would be over. They would at least be spiritually free once more. But Nini—would she not be sacrificed! How complicated life was! Each act, each decision, was so tightly interwoven that liberty, either of thought or action, seemed impossible.

Finally, with the utter futility of trying to unravel so many varying thoughts, Antonia put on her hat and went out to keep the appointment. The first few minutes in the hot sun brought a return of the dizziness she had experienced the day before. Only supreme determination gave her force enough to keep on.

Passing Doctor Catazzo's house on the way and seeing him standing on his terrace, she called to him and asked him to stop by her villa that afternoon. "I suppose I'm not well," she explained, as he came out to speak to her and welcome her home. "Too much heat after the cool summer. I'm sure it's nothing."

He looked at her closely, his large, kind, intensely black eyes opening wide with astonishment.

"Mrs. Hogarth—you have fever now. I can tell it without a thermometer. You ought not to be out in this sun. It is dangerous."

Antonia smiled wearily and nodded towards the Tragara. "I shan't be out long; and at any rate—come to see me this afternoon and prescribe something. I'm sure it's not serious."

The remaining part of the walk seemed more difficult and at the end Mrs. Watson's face was far from being an encouragement. As Antonia sank on the bench beside her—she had chosen a place under a tree near the road—she thought she had never seen a woman so actually violent in expression. There was a heavy, swollen look about the eyes that denoted long hours of sleeplessness; her eyes themselves were filled with a hot, restless gleam.

She had arisen at Antonia's approach and held out her hand, evidently determined to be gracious; both gestures however were an effort and failed in conveying any impression of sincerity.

"Are you ill?" she asked, when Antonia sank down with exhaustion.

"No—it is only the heat."

"I suppose you think I'm crazy—asking you to meet me here in this blazing sun!"

"I did wonder a little at your choice of the Tragara."

"I did it because there isn't anybody here in the morning. I felt pretty certain there'd be no eavesdropping about here."

Antonia's eyebrows went up perceptibly. "Eavesdropping!"

"My companion and maid spy on me all the time. The hotel isn't a safe place. Let's move over to that bench; there's a little more shade there." The change was effected, though the effort cost Antonia, slight as it was, another tremendous call upon her resources. "And this time I don't want a soul to hear us. You won't either—when you know what I'm going to talk about."

The seat was so short that their bodies touched slightly; and their faces, as they turned towards each other, were uncomfortably near.

"What harm could there possibly be in anyone hearing anything we might discuss?" Antonia asked, a slight resentment at the implied intimacy flushing her face.

"It's all very well to talk that way—but you know as well as I do that there are lots of things we have to hide."

"I don't agree with you. Of course a reserved person is not likely to bare his soul to the world—if that is what you mean."

Antonia felt a sudden, unexpected flare of antagonism. In a flash, she understood perfectly the cause of John's impatience. Mrs. Watson's manner at dinner—Antonia's one encounter with her—had been strikingly different from this.

"Call it what you please. I don't care. Anyhow—I don't want anybody but you and me to hear what I'm going to say."

Antonia sat back with determination to accept the interview as best she could; it was already proving distasteful to her; it would probably be more so before the end. The sooner got through with the better.

She waited a full minute before Mrs. Watson began: "It's about your husband."

"Ah!" Antonia looked fully into the face so close to hers and forced a smile. Then it *was* to tell her that she no longer needed John that she had summoned her.

"I suppose a woman like you will hate to listen to

the kind of thing I'm going to say—but you've *got* to listen!"

Antonia's glance fell before the violence which once more flared out from the eyes of the woman beside her. She too was looking, as Hogarth had, into the abyss where hideous things existed. She would have given anything at that moment to have risen and run away; she even made a movement to rise, but it seemed a physical impossibility.

"Has he told you anything?" Mrs. Watson demanded.

"About what?"

"About our trip on the yacht."

This time Antonia started. This was entirely unexpected. She stared with wide open eyes at Mrs. Watson. "Very little. He didn't have much time. He went to Naples last night."

"Yes—I know. I saw him before he left."

"You!" Antonia's eyes gazed, fascinated, into the flaming ones.

"Do you think he would have gone without telling *me!*"

The stress on the pronoun was charged with meaning. Antonia shivered from head to foot. What was this woman insinuating! She laid her hand on the bench and tried to steady herself.

"I'm sorry he didn't tell you. I might have known it. It's just like a man to do a trick like that. They always leave the mean work for women—save their faces—and all that. I never knew one yet that didn't leave the nasty work to women. If he had told you, it would have made it lots easier for me."

Antonia forced a hard smile. "I haven't the slightest idea what you are talking about, Mrs. Watson. If you are trying to tell me that you do not need my husband's services any longer—please say it quite frankly."

It was Mrs. Watson's turn to stare at Antonia; she did so, ending with a loud laugh. "Need your husband's services! That's too good. You don't understand at all what I'm driving at. You haven't caught on at all. So your husband didn't tell you his real reason for leaving you last night?"

"He told me—" Antonia stopped and forced herself to look steadily at Mrs. Watson. Something in the question struck her as furtive. Perhaps, after all, she didn't know John's real reason for leaving and was trying to find out through her. Perhaps John had offered some vague excuse which had aroused her curiosity. At any rate, she felt that it was her part to speak quite frankly. "He went to Naples with the American Consul and some friends who wish him to do some work for them. I'm sorry —but I suppose this will interfere with his arrangement with you."

Mrs. Watson made a sound meant for laughter; in reality it was a scoffing exclamation. "You think that was the real reason!"

"I have no reason to think otherwise. I believe what my husband tells me—implicitly."

Again the scoffing sound. "You won't this time."

"Yes—I think this time as well as every other."

"You won't, I tell you, because it was a lie—a pretty stupid one too, at that. I, for one, am not trying to hide anything from you. That isn't my

way of doing things. I don't give a hang if the truth hurts. I give it—and I want it. It makes everything easier in the end." She jabbed the end of her parasol into the dry earth at her feet. "Let's get down to business. First—there's a question I want to ask you; and I'm going to ask you to be just as frank with me as I am with you." She turned and faced Antonia squarely. "How do you feel about divorce?"

Antonia's amazement shifted into amusement. Had Mrs. Watson also felt a touch of the sun! Had the heat affected her in such a way that she had arranged an interview in the broiling sun for the purpose of splitting hairs on impersonal subjects! There was something fantastic in the whole proceeding.

"I've never thought much on the subject of divorce," Antonia heard herself replying. "It appears to me to be a useful arrangement, even a necessary one in some cases. There seems no plausible reason for people who are miserable together and utterly unsuited to go on living together. I am speaking of cases where there are no children. Children complicate divorce; in fact I think they make it a sin."

"You're talking about any old case. I'm making it a personal matter. What would make you want a divorce from your husband?"

Antonia laughed almost hysterically; the question was so ridiculous. "I can't think of anything that would make me want to divorce John."

"Suppose he was unfaithful to you!"

"I can't imagine such a thing."

"You aren't as clever as I thought you were. Any woman who can't imagine her husband being unfaithful to her is a fool."

Antonia shifted her position and a little sigh of lessened tenseness escaped her. It was quite plain to her now that Mrs. Watson was a bit mad.

"Suppose your husband was living with another woman! If you found it out—I say if because I believe you'd be the last person to know it—what would you do?—go on living with him and say nothing?"

"Would it really amuse you to have me think over such an absurd situation and tell you what I would do?"

"Amuse me! Nonsense! I'm serious. What would you do?"

"For my child's sake—I should do nothing."

"Why?"

"Because—because I am sure he would eventually come back to me—to us—as he was before."

Mrs. Watson turned toward her with sudden fury. "You little fool! You don't know what you are talking about! He is already doing it! He is already the lover of another woman! Now—try your theories on yourself and see how you feel!"

Antonia made another attempt to rise and failed. Even words came now with difficulty. And yet, beneath the overpowering weakness that had been creeping over her throughout their conversation, she felt an irresistible desire to combat this mad woman. "Do you imagine for a moment that I believe you?"

"Believe me or not—it's true."

"How do *you* know?"

"Because—look at me—straight in the eyes—we aren't going to beat about the bush any longer. I'm the woman."

Her eyes, more than her words, held Antonia with a sort of hypnotic power. She could not have now lifted a hand unless this woman had given her permission. The world was reeling about her; she was adrift in some mist in which she had no volition. Resistance no longer entered her thoughts. And the words that reached their way into her consciousness came through some medium apparently other than her ears. There was no physical contact in the sounds; they burned their way into her mind as if by means of some fire within herself.

"Now you know what I've been leading up to all this time. It has been a waste of words, but somehow—I thought you might have an inkling of what I was driving at. I tried to make him tell you himself. He couldn't do that; he wasn't man enough. No men are. They leave that sort of thing for us to do—say they can't hurt a woman—all that sort of rot . . . Well—he has gone away—and he's not coming back. He's going to meet me in Naples to-morrow. We're going away together. Of course we can't get married until there's a divorce. You've got to get that—and you will—because—are you listening to me?—because it's my chance to do something with him. You've had your chance and failed. It's for me to make a man of him—and I'm going to do it. Another thing—I'm going to do something for you—at least for your child. That's the same thing; isn't it? . . . He wants the child. That's been

the hitch in the whole thing. I believe he loves that child more than he does—me."

The voice—or rather the strange words that roared in Antonia's consciousness—seemed to grow incoherent, then silent; then again they sprang into raging life.

"You've got to get a divorce for the sake of your child. I've promised to do everything under the sun for her—take her where she can get healthy and strong. I don't want a puny child around me. I'm going to give her everything he wants for her—everything you want for her—things neither of you could ever give her. Are you listening to me? I'm going to save her life. I know what that doctor in Switzerland said to you—only he didn't tell you half the truth. She can't live if she stays here—and who's going to take her away if I don't? You see—you've got to do what I tell you—and do it quick. . . . You needn't be afraid of believing me. I never go back on my word—once it's given. Don't try to fight me. Don't try to persuade yourself you can have your way against mine. You can't. I've set my mind on this—and it has got to be done. . . . What's the matter with you? Has the heat gone to your head? It *is* hot enough here to addle anybody's brain."

Antonia felt a heavy hand laid on her shoulder. It seemed to bear down on her with terrific force. She was being crushed. Where had she heard of hands like these? "Repulsive, thick and heavy, without sensitiveness, without gentleness, without any feeling—without any sense of touch—unconsciously cruel—they could do horribly cruel things

and never know it." She shivered violently and sank back, crouching, on the bench. Then, with an effort that tore her asunder, words came forth—a cry of agony.

"Oh, God—leave me—please leave me!"

She no longer saw the torturing, overpowering eyes; but words were again beating upon her.

"All right—I'll leave you. But don't lose any time. Make up your mind at once. I'll come to your house this afternoon and help you plan—if you need my help—and I guess you will."

Then, for a second, peace.

But only for a second. Words came hurtling back, repetition, the same words all over again, made more terrifying by that moment of silence. They were being repeated ten thousand times and with increasing power. They were unbearable. Something must be done to stop them; otherwise——

Antonia struggled to her feet, steadied herself by resting one hand on the back of the bench, looked vaguely about, then, with the realization that the sound of words was once more upon her, rushed headlong down the road. Her speed increased. Force of habit made her turn in the path that led towards her villa. But a moment later, realizing this, she swerved in another direction. That was no longer possible. She had said she would come there this afternoon. There must be some way to escape her. She ran on, not knowing now where she was going. She was only conscious of a physical power that carried her along with its own force. The steep path which led to the Piccola Marina offered no obstacle to her flying feet.

The old fisherman—the one from whom they had rented a boat for several years—saw her coming and hoisted the sail. She had only to spring into the boat. Everything was ready for her—as it had been so many happy summer days.

Did the Signora want to sail herself—alone?

Alone—alone—ah, yes—always alone!

He gave the boat a strong push and it floated far out on the blue surface of the water.

How beautifully blue it was—how deep and cool and quiet! Surely fire would be extinguished in those calm, infinite depths! Ah!

CHAPTER IX

AGAIN the Capri boat—a year later.

Hogarth had gone aboard a little early so as to avoid the rush of tourist passengers and, having found a seat on the upper deck sheltered from the sun, sat there with eyes straining towards the gray outline of the distant island. He was thinner than the year before; his leanness was more accentuated; at times he appeared actually emaciated; the sharpness of his features gave a suggestion of years to his whole personality; his clothes even hung on him with the air of depression. He gave the impression of a man who had experienced some great tragedy, was still in the grip of it, and preferred aloofness from everyone, everything. Looking at him, one would be almost sure to feel that here was a man who needed sympathy, needed it desperately, and yet abhorred it. His coldly repellent manner forbade all advances. Evidently he wished to be alone and had best be left that way.

As the boat left Naples and steamed out into the bay, his eyes, fixed on his destination, changed expression. Sorrow shifted into anxiety. With the journey begun, he sighed deeply. What was he going to find at the journey's end? Would Nini be better? Would she have passed a better day? Or—would the Doctor be at the dock to greet him, a serious expression telling everything? This thought, all through the past month, had sprung into his mind

as the boat started on the homeward journey—and created terror there. Would someone be there to meet him and tell him the long struggle was over? The long struggle! Could it go on much longer! Could Nini, could he himself, keep up this battle indefinitely? Could there be no end in sight? Had God forgotten them entirely?

He made a supreme effort to crush all memories of the past year into the background and brace himself for the cheerfulness that would be needed when he reached home. Nini would insist upon being amused; she would expect him to tell her of his day away from her; incidents would have to be made up out of whole cloth to divert her, amusing incidents that never entered the humdrum existence of the office work he was now carrying on.

He drew the balmy air deep into his lungs with an effort at clearing his mind. It was all cobwebs—sticky, insistent, enmeshing. How could he forget, even for a few moments! Every little detail kept the horror so near to him. A sailboat, just passing the steamer, its orange-colored sail gleaming in the sun, brought everything back sharply distinct. It made him think of the little boat they had so often sailed away in from the Piccola Marina—the little boat in which Antonia had made her last voyage. As he watched it he shut his eyes with an access of pain. It was no longer sailing jauntily along. It was being towed into the Piccola Marina, maimed like a bird whose wings have been torn from it, its sails gone, its rudder missing, its keel jagged by the rocks of the distant coast where it had been found. How it had battled against that first autumn wind!

How brave and courageous it had been! And—at last, had fallen before the onrush of tempest. Its return had brought little evidence of the life that had gone with it into the tempest—and been snuffed out. A bit of white veil was still clinging to the broken mast—a veil that Antonia had worn. That was all he knew—all he would ever know. No message, no call for help, no haunting cry of fear and despair! But he needed no words to fire his imagination. It was all as clearly engraved on his mind as if he had been there with her, struggling to save her, battling vainly against relentless elements.

Ah—those days of endless waiting before the little boat was found! Nini's tear-stained, wondering, uncomprehending eyes! Her consequent illness—his own despair! And with all this, necessity, the necessity that made him brace himself for actually going on and carrying out work which he had pledged himself to do. That, perhaps, had saved him; it had at least forced him into action, kept his mind occupied and functioning.

A whole year! Was it possible! Could it be possible! Yes—he had gone on living, going every morning on the early boat for Naples and returning every evening. The pittance he gained kept a roof over their heads and gave them food—a bare living, nothing more. And all the time there was gradually being forced upon him the realization that the little life beside his—a part of his—the best part too, the only part he really clung to—was lessening in momentum. The tiny heart seemed daily to find it a greater task to go on beating. "You must get her away from here," the Doctor had urged again

and again. "Where?" "To Switzerland—to a more bracing climate." He had made the effort and failed. His one friend in Naples, the Consul to whom he had often gone for advice and help, had been transferred to the Orient. There seemed nothing now to do but accept the inevitable. Dejection accentuated this attitude. Why should anyone insist upon fighting what the fates had ordained!

A whiff of strong scent struck him like a blow; and with it came a rush of long unthought-of incidents. He started restlessly; then settled back on the camp-stool. How completely those two months had been blotted out by tragedy! They had ceased to exist. Had they ever really existed! He tried to recall details but the effort died in indifference. Why even try to recall a past so remote as that! Why think of anything!

Again the strong, penetrating scent—and, ah, the voice—as commanding, as dominant as ever! Were his fancies playing him tricks! Could the past come back that way, so real, so insistent! It was exactly as though that strange woman, forgotten now for so long, were on the boat with him.

He forced himself to turn and thus dismiss the illusion. But his eyes played him false; they too created fancies. He saw her distinctly, almost identically as he had the first time, with companion and maid and dogs and the pile of gleaming bags. It was all fantastically real. He shuddered and turned away. He must conquer such weird imaginings. If he did not keep a tight rein on himself he would not be fit for the work that was such an insistent neces-

sity; his employers would soon be thinking him mad and dismissing him.

He stared straight ahead of him the rest of the voyage; he even lingered on the boat, when it reached Capri, so as to avoid seeing anyone who might again call into existence those weird thoughts. When he went ashore the tourists had disappeared in the funicula which carried them up to the town—and no one was there to greet him with solemn face.

He pulled himself together and started up the long road.

Emilia's gentle tap on the door startled him out of reverie. He drew his hand quietly out of the grasp of the tiny fingers that clung to his, saw that the tired little eyes were closed in peaceful sleep, and went to the door.

"A lady wishes to see the Signore."

"Who is it?"

"The one who was here last year."

Hogarth brushed his hand across his eyes. "It can't possibly be——"

"It is the one the Signore traveled with on the yacht."

Then his fancies had been reality! It *was* she he had seen on the boat!

He stood at the door of the room a few moments undecided—in reality indifferent. His first sight of her on the boat—what he thought was the creation of disordered thoughts—had been a distinct shock; her presence had recalled so much that touched closely those days preceding Antonia's death. But the shock once passed, only passivity remained, even

memory, at least of details, had grown dim. If her appearance and her disappearance had come at some other moment in his life, she would have probably made a lasting impression upon him. As it was, intense suffering, the depths of sorrow, even despair, had made her almost wholly absent from his thoughts during the past year.

He found himself trying to recall more than the scene on the yacht. He had never seen her since then. She had not even sent him a message after the tragedy. She had gone away silently and, he supposed, forever. Why was she back again? Ah—he had it now! She had come there to buy a villa. Perhaps she was come again on the same mission.

He entered the room smiling courteously and with extended hand. He might have been perfunctorily greeting an entire stranger; his manner was so perfectly free of pose that it was convincing.

Mrs. Watson took his hand limply and stared with what was very frank surprise into his face. When she spoke, her voice was almost a whisper.

"You are ill!"

"Thank you—I am quite well," Hogarth answered easily. "Won't you have this chair. I think I saw you from a distance on the boat this afternoon."

His calm manner appeared to brush away her first anxiety; and in its place came quickly restored assurance.

"Why didn't you speak to me?"

Hogarth flushed and then, quite in a flash, so much that he had forgotten about her rushed over him—her direct, uncompromising questions; her insistence; her, yes, her unsensitiveness.

"Didn't you want to?"

Her eyes, searching his face in an extraordinary way, confused him; her stare was so intensely probing, so earnestly seeking for something, so really hungry.

Without waiting for her to be seated and hoping that she would take a chair if he did—and thus relieve the tenseness of her gaze—Hogarth sat down.

"Didn't you?" she repeated, still standing, still intently searching his face.

"I don't think I quite understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. You might as well tell me the truth. Didn't you want to speak to me?"

"I—I suppose I thought you would not remember me."

"You couldn't have thought that."

"Why not? A year is a long time to remember one—especially when—" he ended helplessly. This was mere fencing; and unpleasant fencing too. A wave of the old irritation swept over him. He remembered only too well now her tenaciousness, her unwillingness to infer and leave things unnamed. Why under the sun had she turned up again!

She finally sat down on the divan with decision; but, in spite of her definite gestures, her direct manner and her vastly disturbing eyes, Hogarth thought he heard the least suggestion of a sigh. It was exactly as though she were experiencing some emotion which she felt deeply and was trying to smother.

In the full minute of silence that followed, Hogarth offered her a cigarette. She refused it abruptly. He lighted one himself and drew at it nervously. His one desire just then was to see her go through the

door and out of his life forever. Still, whatever she might have to say to him, whatever were the object of her visit, he was determined to give her all the time and attention she wished in which to explain herself. His polite indifference was hardly encouraging, but it expressed exactly his attitude—an attitude which he hoped she would perceive.

She stirred out of her immobility; her gaze shifted from his face; again there was the least suggestion of a smothered sigh.

"A year *is* a long time—to wait."

"Unless one is accustomed to waiting." An unconscious line of suffering showed on his brow.

She saw the expression of suffering and her reaction to it appeared to be one of sudden anger. "Don't try to play this sort of game with me. I hate pretense. You know exactly what I have been waiting for!"

Hogarth's amazement was reflected in his face. Both of them were now facing each other with a flare-up of incomprehension.

"Why should I know?" he exclaimed.

"How could you help knowing!" she returned, with the old suggestion of violence. "It isn't possible for you to be that stupid!"

"You mean——"

There was no longer any suggestion of violence; it was actually there—in her eyes, in her quickly rising and falling bosom, in the whole of her virile personality.

"I've been waiting for you."

Hogarth flushed with very deep anger and rose. This was the last thing he had expected—the last

thing he was prepared to meet. The scene on the yacht rose before him in all its sordid frankness. Disgust swept over him as impetuously as if he were once more there, facing her primitive declaration. The few times he had thought of it since, he had dismissed it as a passing passionate moment, due to the surroundings, to propinquity and a certain sensual appeal of the entire *ambiente*. Men experienced such moments; why not women also! The personality of the one who created such emotion was not a very necessary ingredient; it was merely the result of physical desire that demanded immediate outlet. It was not unnatural for a woman of her intense vitality to experience such moments; indeed her personality rather suggested them. But for her to remember and recall it with words was unbelievable. Was that the difference in sex? Did men quickly forget such incidents and women deliberately cling to them? If this were the case, he had better explain it fully to her and thus clear the situation once for all. Ah—he understood now! She had come to explain herself and was finding it difficult.

"Mrs. Watson—don't let's speak of the past. I have forgotten it. You must forget it too. Let's think of it as never having happened."

"I don't intend to forget it." Then, strangely gentle for her: "I don't want to forget it. That trip on the yacht was the happiest time of my life. I want it again—and—" with a sudden return of decision—"I'm going to have it again."

Hogarth's amazement turned into very keen curiosity. Impersonal interest swept over him and chained his attention. He found himself looking at

her as though he were not in the room, as though he had no connection whatever with the matter.

"How can you have it again?" he heard himself asking her.

"As before—with you."

"You actually expect me to go on another yachting expedition with you?"

"I expect you to marry me."

Astonishment shifted to uncontrollable amusement. He laughed gaily—a thing he had not done for a year; his face lit up with a charming glow of merriment; his whole presence seemed suddenly to have shifted from austere severity and aloofness to one of light-hearted boyishness. The whole proceeding was too fantastic, too absurd, not to be enjoyed to the fullest. He let himself go without further inhibitions.

The change in him had a responsive effect upon her. She did not exactly laugh with him, but her smile was very pleasant and human.

"I suppose it does sound funny to you. Women don't often do it this way; do they?"

"Do they ever do it at all?"

"Stuff and nonsense! You aren't the sort of man that believes men marry women! That's an exploded theory. Anybody with any sense admits to-day that women marry men. The only trouble is that most of us try to do it in the old-fashioned way and fool ourselves into thinking that no one, not even the man, realizes what we are up to."

"An amazing theory! I never heard it before."

"Isn't it entirely natural? Why haven't we the

right to go after the man we want just as well as you go after women you want?"

"Still—the method is traditionally more subtle."

"Subtle! What do I care for that! I've always known what I wanted and gone after it. It's the only way I've ever got anything."

"But I can't see any fun in achieving your desires—at least when it's a question of love—if it's a one-sided affair."

"Love is pretty much a one-sided affair. One person always loves more than the other. Women always do. No man ever loves a woman as much as she loves him. I've seen too many women giving up everything for men who didn't care a rap for them. I suppose that's natural too. If you love a man and get him—what difference does it make? You've got him; haven't you? You've got what you wanted. That's the main thing."

"That's only the beginning. Suppose you couldn't keep him?"

"That's the woman's fault. Once she has a man, she can keep him—that is if she has got any sense at all. If she doesn't keep him—well—she'll get no sympathy from me."

At moments, Hogarth doubted the sincerity of the words he was hearing; yet the frankness with which they were spoken left little room for suspicions. He found such extraordinary sentiments, spoken with downright frankness, possessing a real tang of excitement.

"I wonder how many women would agree with you?"

"All of them—if they had enough nerve to be honest."

Hogarth slipped into contemplation of what she had said. The cigarette went out in his fingers. Her theory had immense possibilities.

Her next question startled him back to realities. "Don't you agree with me?"

"I?—no. Of course not."

"Why."

"No woman could hold a man that didn't love her. I don't see why she would want to. Even having acquaintances about that don't like us makes the world most unsympathetic. My theory of a happy existence is to love and be loved."

"I don't see much difference in your theory and mine. I suppose you believe loving creates love; don't you?"

"In most cases, yes; when there is a sympathetic basis to begin with."

"Well—isn't there a sympathetic basis, as you call it, with us?"

Hogarth's amusement vanished. "Please let's keep our conversation impersonal; it's delightful that way; otherwise—it's impossible."

Anger flared sullenly in her eyes. "I didn't come here to talk theories with you. I'm talking facts. I asked you if there wasn't a sympathetic basis between you and me."

"You make it very difficult."

"Difficult! Why? I want only the truth."

"Well, then—frankly—no."

"You mean—you don't like me at all? No—don't be afraid to say it."

Hogarth rose. "Really—this is quite——"

"No—it isn't."

"You must realize that there is nothing sympathetic between you and me. Our ideals, even our standards, are as far apart as the poles. Everything in us clashes. We are counter irritants. But why discuss it?" He turned away with an access of utter weariness.

"Do you dislike me?"

"I dislike many of your traits."

"Which?"

"I beg of you——"

"Am I physically repulsive to you?"

"The majority of people would call you very handsome."

"I know that well enough. Do you?"

Hogarth's innate courtesy stung him into a modulated answer. "Yes—so do I."

She sank back on the divan and reached for a cigarette, which he lighted for her. Her mood was apparently shifting now. She seemed more reflective than he had ever seen her: and that unfamiliar gentleness which he had sensed in the first part of her visit appeared again.

"You see," her voice even showed a tinge of the softness of the new mood, "I've never been in love before. I never thought I would be. Funny; isn't it! I tried to argue myself out of it at first; then I gave up. What's the use of fighting a thing like that! As a matter of fact, I didn't want to fight it. I actually wanted to give in to it. It's the biggest thing that's yet happened to me. And, do you know, I believe it's the biggest thing that ever will. Some

people say death's bigger. I don't believe it. Besides—that's all guess work; love isn't . . . All the past year I haven't been caring a hang about anything but getting back here. I had somebody from here write me about you—what you were doing, how you were. I used to watch for those letters like a silly school girl waiting for love letters from her best beau. Well—it went on and on—and I just couldn't stand it any longer. So—here I am."

She threw away her cigarette and stood up with sudden impatience, as though the mood were distasteful to her.

"Look here—don't be a fool. We can have lots of fun out of life together. If you give me a chance, I'll make you love me. I'm not afraid to try—and I know how. I've never failed, once my mind's made up. Don't be stupid. Think what I can give you!"

"What can you give me that I want?"

"Everything in the world."

"What I want is not in this world."

"What?"

"My wife."

She did not swerve before his suffering eyes. "Don't think of that. You can't live in the past. You're too young. You've got the best part of life before you. I can make it anything you want. I've got more money than I know what to do with. I want you to help me spend it—on yourself—and" her voice grew as distinct as a hammer on marble—"on your little girl."

Hogarth started and shaded his eyes with his hand. Standing there before him, actually towering over

him, he felt a sudden, overwhelming fear of her unlimited power.

"Get rid of the belief that you've got to go on living this way. It isn't fair to yourself—and you know it isn't fair to your child. Your wife wouldn't have asked it of you. You're all wrong. You aren't seeing straight. If you love your child as I believe you do, you haven't got the right to keep all the good things of life, all the things she needs, from her. You've got a chance to save her life. That's just about what it amounts to . . . Look here—I tell you what I'll do. The day we are married I'll settle a big amount on her. I'll settle—yes, I can do it now—I'll settle a million dollars on her. I'll do more than that. We'll take her to the best doctors to be found; we'll go anywhere they say; we'll get her well and strong. We'll stay with her all the time—if you want to . . . You needn't be afraid of my bothering you to death. I'm not that sort of a woman. I'll let you do whatever you want to. You can write all the books you have a mind to and if publishers won't bring them out, I will . . . You won't have a care in the world. I'll see to that . . . Have I made myself clear?"

"Perfectly."

"Well—what do you say?"

Hogarth lowered his hand and looked up at her. She was completely the Victory of Samothrace now. With outstretched arms, flowing robes, the wind back of her, rushing forward, resistless, she was enveloping him. Nothing could have withstood the onrush. She was beyond human resistance. Words, arguments, facts went down before her force.

Hogarth struggled to his feet, put out a hand as if to ward off some devitalizing touch, and crossed to the open window. He stood with his back to the room and drew in several deep breaths of cool air.

"And for all this," he said slowly, "I give——"

"Yourself."

A whimsical smile twisted his lips. The old familiar scene between Mephistopheles and Faust had flashed before him.

Her question reached him across the room. "Well?"

His affirmative nod was not the result of his own volition; it was automatic, the effect of some power other than his own; it was blind obedience to the pronouncement of the fates.

Quickly following his nod, he shuddered. Loud laughter smote his ears and penetrated to the innermost recesses of his being. How terrific it was! Not a sound of mirth; only an outcry of victory, triumph, exultation—the sort of cry that might have sounded across the world when it was still all primitive chaos.

CHAPTER X

"WHERE are you taking me this evening?" Mrs. Houghton asked, sinking back comfortably on the cushions of the motor. "Not that the name, even if I heard it, would mean anything to me. You New Yorkers change over night."

"You New Yorkers!" scoffed Mrs. Tillott. "Aren't you one of us—more than anyone else I know?"

"Not at all. I was born here, brought up here, married here, but that was when New York was an American city—in the dark ages, probably the people *lived* here for thirty years—thank heavens! Washington appeals to me much more; it is really American—and much less vulgar. We at least maintain some remnants of distinction there—I mean distinction of manners and thought. Here, your only standard of measure is gold."

"That is neither original nor worthy of you. You know very well New York offers the best in every way that the world has produced."

"In finance, industries, commerce, things of that sort, yes. I grant you all that. I was thinking and speaking, at the moment, of social life. I won't use that abhorrent term—society."

"We have that too. Your point of view and opinions are colored by your Washington friends who

only come here to shop and eat and go to theaters. The stranger never sees real New York people. You know yourself you never meet your friends in hotels and restaurants; such places are frequented only by out of town people."

"Quite true—as far as it goes. What I'm complaining of is that what you to-day call prominent New Yorkers are all absolutely newcomers. What has happened to the families I used to know? Have they petered out—degenerated into nonenities? Can't they hold their own against this horde of strangers?"

"You forget New York is a huge metropolis. To rise above the mass here, one must possess some really salient characteristic. I believe all those who become conspicuous here deserve it."

Mrs. Houghton sniffed, a gesture meant to express contempt and which successfully achieved the desired result. "I suppose there's such a thing as becoming conspicuous on account of one's appalling vulgarity."

Mrs. Tillott laughed immoderately. Their tiffs, which, to a stranger, would have sounded somewhat violent, were a constant element in their association. When Mrs. Tillott visited Washington, her remarks upon that city aroused all the fighting qualities in Mrs. Houghton; and when the latter came to New York the former was forced into self defense. Each one got a good deal of amusement out of the other's criticism.

"Are you taking me to some place this evening to prove me in the wrong?" Mrs. Houghton resumed.

Mrs. Tillott laughed more heartily than ever. "You'll say it was the contrary when you get there."

"You said the people were conspicuous."

"I never used such an expression at all. I said they had a quite extraordinary house; at least I've been told so. I've never seen it myself. Someone said there was nothing in it under a thousand years old."

"It sounds appalling enough. I suppose, of course, these people were not born here. Where are they from?"

"As a matter of fact, I don't know. Somewhere out West, I think."

"Does your intimacy carry you far enough to know their names?"

"Yes—I happen to know that. It is Hogarth."

"Sounds English."

"And I know that they have only been in New York two years; the last ten have been spent abroad, so I'm told."

"I see. Made their way into New York by way of London and Paris. It appears to be a popular and successful method. Do you know anything else about them?"

"Not really very much. I met Mr. Hogarth last year. You see, his daughter and mine go to the same school. She is quite delightful—with all the simplicity and good manners of the European girl. You know what I mean; everything that is opposed to the flapper type. He is quite charming too; and one of the handsomest men I have ever seen; very quiet and distinguished—and a most winning voice. I only met Mrs. Hogarth last week. It will be interesting to know what you think of her."

"Is she going to take my breath away?"

"That depends upon your mood at the moment. She is hardly negative."

"What sort of entertainment are they giving?"

"Really a children's party—given for Jeanne Hogarth and her school friends. You see, they are all home for the Christmas vacations. For us, the parents and chaperones, there will be several singers from the Metropolitan. Oh, yes, they do things with a *beau geste*."

The motor swung into an enclosure surrounded by a high wall; and then into a driveway which, under high vaulted arches, appeared to lead directly under the main part of the house. The impression one received, especially in the dim glow of lanterns sunk in the walls, was distinctly that of entering the courtyard of some old world palace. Even the stones of the arches had been treated in such a way as to produce the effect of age, almost crumbling antiquity.

Mrs. Houghton peered through the windows of the motor. "This looks promising. Not bad at all. Rather Roman."

"I believe Mr. Hogarth lived some time in Italy. He is said to have a *flair* for this sort of thing."

They descended and entered a large hall where flambeaux, tapestries, stone walls, a heavily gilded wooden ceiling and a black and white marble floor carried out the impression conveyed by the exterior. It might easily have been Europe. It seemed impossible to remember that Fifth Avenue was still within hearing distance. Formal English footmen gave the surroundings the air of what is to-day considered the acme of correctness. A broad staircase, red carpeted,

led to an upper corridor which, in turn, led on to a large salon.

"It's quite magnificent." Mrs. Houghton paused before entering the reception room, raised her *face-à-main* and frankly looked about. She was invariably generous and ready to bestow praise when she considered it deserved. "I haven't seen a bad thing yet. Most Americans' ideas of an Italian house consist of low ceilings and groups of marble statues—things one never sees in Italian palaces unless they have been turned into museums. Let's get on to the hostess. I'm dying to see her."

They were announced by a footman and swept forward into the salon and up to Mrs. Hogarth.

The past twelve years had been kind to Mary Hogarth. She had worn well. One felt instinctively that she would wear well, physically, up to the very last moment. She was as vividly handsome as ever, perhaps even a bit more so, for she was the type more suited to forty than to thirty. Youth was not her period; she had always been full blown—too mature, too ripe for youthfulness; middle age, or at least a time which suggests neither the end of youth nor the beginning of age, was best suited to her. She suggested perfectly functioning forces. Her eyes glowed even more than ever with the star-like gleam; they were steady and radiant; they expressed convincingly great happiness; they told you quite frankly they had nothing to hide, that life was intense and satisfactory. Her hair shone with an abundance of fire and gloss; her skin stressed perfect health; her figure was made up of generous but modulated curves. There was something tremen-

dously sumptuous about her; in fact, that was the impression she made on most people—sumptuous and perhaps rather sensual. One did not have to look long and very searchingly to realize that a great part of her presence was made up of purely material components; the plastic outcome was undeniably an assembly of arrogance, imposing pride and careless contempt.

Standing beside her, Hogarth looked slightly older. The hair on his temples was gray; his eyes were a bit tired; his quiet dignity and repose, which many found attractive and aristocratic, accentuated an impression of age. He rather suggested a man who had known life thoroughly, had drunk deeply of its bitterness and its sweetness, and had reached a period where indifference might have been the dominating characteristic if intellectual interests had not saved him. His thoughtful, handsome eyes, when turned with interest upon one, had much to do with contradicting a forbidding impression, the one usually received when one viewed him from a distance or without personal contact. In repose he was inclined to appear cold and reserved; in action there was always a warm flow of sympathetic charm. In contrast to his wife, there was little evidence of material existence. Though perfectly, even smartly groomed, his lithe figure, finely chiseled face and intellectual eyes suggested a life far removed from the grossly sensual.

The new arrivals were greeted by their hostess with that casual indifference which appears to-day to have taken the place of formal greeting. Mrs.

Hogarth turned from Mrs. Houghton back to Mrs. Tillott.

"Jeanne isn't here. Late this afternoon she telegraphed that one of the teachers at the school—a Mrs. Bryce, I believe she's called; English teacher, I've never seen her—had to be operated upon for appendicitis. Jeanne, if you please, merely telegraphed that she would remain with her until the operation was over and the woman out of danger. Did you ever hear anything so absurd! Imagine a young girl of to-day missing a party because a teacher was undergoing an operation—and for appendicitis at that! I call it rotten selfishness to disappoint us this way."

"And she will not be here at all! I'm sorry."

"There's a bare chance. I got her on the telephone about an hour ago and told her she had to come—teacher or no teacher. She said the operation had passed off successfully and that the doctors thought the woman out of danger; at any rate she'd know in an hour or two and if everything went well she'd take the late train and arrive about midnight. I've sent my maid and the motor to the station to wait for her. Would your daughter treat you this way? I call it absolutely beastly. And the party is given for her, you know."

Mrs. Houghton shifted her glance to her host and met his eyes. "I should think you'd be rather proud of a daughter who is willing to forego a dance to remain beside an ill friend."

Hogarth returned her glance with quick appreciation. "I *am* proud of her," he said quietly.

"Is she always this way?"

He smiled assentingly.

"I'd like to hear more of her. One so seldom sees that type of young person to-day."

With the sudden flow of sympathy that drew them together, Hogarth offered Mrs. Houghton his arm and threaded a way through the crowded room, towards the ballroom where the younger element was already dancing.

The old lady put up her glasses and took in the details of the room. The walls were frescoed with an XVIII Century design of panels, architecturally framed by figures and conventionalized fruits and flowers. Except for the landscapes in the panels, the dominating effect was gray and white. The simple *boiserie* about the windows and doors was painted a pale green with a delicate design in gold leaf. The chairs and benches arranged against the walls were of the same color with a design of flowers. There were no hangings, no upholstered furniture, nothing to encumber the delightfully simple, gay, fresh effect of the room. Even the gaily painted Venetian brackets on the walls carried out the idea of light-hearted simplicity.

"How clever of you to do a ballroom like this," Mrs. Houghton exclaimed. "You must know Italy *au fond*."

"I lived there nine years. The idea of this room came from a villa near Viterbo."

"I adore Italy. Do let's sit down and talk about it. Can you spare a moment from all your friends to an old lady?"

Hogarth gave every evidence of enjoying his talk with Mrs. Houghton; she even fancied he meant her

to understand, when they were interrupted by others coming up to them, that he would have preferred remaining with her. She watched him as he moved across the room and stopped beside his wife. Seeing them standing side by side, her eyes glowed with all sorts of questions. Her thoughts even took form in a smothered exclamation: "Why, in the name of heaven, are those two people living together!"

Later in the evening, when Hogarth saw that all the guests had arrived and been welcomed, he withdrew a little from the crowd and stood in one of the galleries that gave into the ballroom. He lighted a cigar and looked on at the young people. One often found him thus at large gatherings. He was invariably more onlooker than participant.

Just now he was seeing little that was going on before him. Mrs. Houghton's sympathetic appreciation of his daughter's action had created a chain of questions. He had not seen Jeanne for four months, not since she had returned to finish the second year's course at the school chosen for her. The effect upon her of her first year in America had disappointed him; she had come back to spend the summer with them, after the first year's course, somewhat harder, more assured, self-absorbed and perhaps selfish. Hogarth wondered if this were the effect of American school life and association with American girls, or was it only development of character. He was not sure. At any rate, no matter what the result, it was to some extent his fault. When she was sixteen he had felt that she should be brought back to her own country and be given an opportunity to know America. The sixteen years of

her life, spent almost exclusively in Europe, was making her extraneous to her native land. It was not fair to her. She should have friends among her own compatriots; she should know their amusements and pleasures; she should receive, at an impressionable age, the influences which had moulded her mother and him.

Hogarth sighed when he thought of that first year in America. It had been a failure—so far as the association of father and daughter went. Up to that time, it had been a rather extraordinary intimacy, very close, very dependent, very delightful. Hogarth had had much to do with directing Jeanne's development, shaping her mind, pilotting her thoughts, developing her tastes—and he had been satisfied with the result. Was all this to be brushed aside, lost, count for nothing in the disturbing factor of American impressions!

At the beginning of the second year, his attention had been caught by the gradual and very subtle change in the tone of Jeanne's letters to him. Soon after the autumn term began, her letters arrived more regularly; she wrote well, even thoughtfully, of what she was doing and studying; at times he was impressed by a certain style that was showing in her composition. He mentioned this to her in his replies and she had answered that it was all due to the influence of her new teacher in English, a woman who had just come to the school that year and whom she found delightful and stimulating—even inspiring. Later, a long missing, affectionate note crept into the letters. Timid at first, then gradually more

courageous, it finally became a dominant strain. She appeared actually to be *thinking of him.*

He realized that some new influence was at work upon her. As this certainty deepened he experienced a sensation of resentment that this influence should have come from someone rather than himself; he even felt a slight fear of the extent to which it might go. It was a good influence, he was sure of that, but—it was not his. An instance of this extraneous power was the telegram she had sent that evening. A year ago she would not have thought of doing such a thing. It showed a new thoughtfulness and sympathy that was almost mature. The realization brought a thrill of joy to him. It was so exactly what he wanted her to be. Disappointment at not seeing her was swept aside in the joy of knowing that she was willing to give up her own pleasure and remain beside a friend.

This new sensation of joy made his past life, the last twelve years of it, take on another color. Its self-abnegation, its distastefulness, its bitterness, even shame, grew dim. If Jeanne came out of it glorified, what did it matter what he had endured or was still to endure! His attitude, which latent strength had aided him in creating and maintaining with determination, had carried him this far with almost inhuman calm. The acceptance of secondary place, of self-effacement, even self-immolation, had so developed this attitude that he no longer thought of himself as a free agent. He was merely a part in a machine that was revolving about his child, an important part, yes, a part without which the machine could not function, but still a part which had

no thought of self. Perhaps this had saved him and carried him up to forty in a sort of blind submission to fate. Sometimes, particularly since his return to America, self contempt had swept over him with fairly devastating force. No other country in which he had lived had shown him so convincingly the place a man should take in the life of his family, the rock of strength the father should become, the dependence placed upon his shoulders. Beside the American head of a family, he felt himself a cheap mannequin, neither demanding nor receiving respect. This feeling had erected bars between him and friendships; he held himself aloof; he felt so keenly what others must be thinking. How could they help thinking it when he was so keenly aware of it himself! Yet this same aloofness—dignity, many called it—had created respect where he least expected it. His sensitiveness blinded him to the fact that the pace of the world to-day gives little time for analysis. His quiet manner, his obvious culture and the magic *ambiente* of unlimited riches which surrounded him and his wife were sufficient for the unthinking world. Here were people who had all the luxuries, handsome houses in America, European villas, famous chefs, a Continental background, a *flair* for entertaining—everything. What more could you want? If questions were asked—answer them yourself. Look and see. Everyone admitted that Hogarth was a gentleman; many championed his wife as being a tremendously handsome and attractive woman. The consensus of opinion was that they were an addition to any group.

A little after midnight Mrs. Houghton found herself again beside Hogarth.

"Thank you for a very pleasant evening. Your house is quite charming." The old lady beamed on him and added, with the privilege of age: "And so are you."

Hogarth flushed and smiled at her. Twelve years had not robbed his smile of its winning quality; it came so seldom now that it was all the more effective. "You are very kind."

"No—I'm only sincere. Do you ever come to Washington?"

"I haven't been there since I was a boy."

"Then come sometime—and bring your daughter to see me. I'd like to meet her."

Hogarth's smile deepened. "She may appear at any moment now. I haven't given up all hope of her coming. Ah!"

While speaking his glance had swept the room and suddenly become fixed. Mrs. Houghton, watching him, saw his eyes change expression. They at first suggested surprise, then bewilderment, and then gradually began to glow with one of the most touchingly gentle expressions she had ever seen. She turned to discover what had caused the change in him.

A young girl had just entered the ballroom and was standing in the center of the floor, quite unconscious of the crowd and apparently looking for someone. She was very slight and fragile, almost too delicate. The very simple, shimmering white frock —it appeared to have been held a moment under a shower of tiny brilliants—though full and graceful,

did not disguise her thinness. But it was not the thinness of emaciation; it was only delicacy of bone and sinew that made for very fine line and distinction. She held herself very straight and upright—a slender reed that might be bent by the wind but would surely spring quickly back into place again. Her small head, set on a slender neck and framed with dusky black hair, was circled by a wreath of tiny green leaves dusted with the same brilliants of her gown. Her eyes, dark gray, at the moment almost as black as her hair, gave extraordinary character and allure to her personality; they were intellectual and yet somehow infinitely warm with sympathy.

She smiled at the group of young people that rushed forward to greet her; she shook hands with them; but all the while she glanced furtively about the room. It was evident that she was not quite ready to give them her attention. Then her face lit up with a smile that was like a window thrown wide open to dazzling sunlight; and she ran lightly across the ballroom and up to Hogarth.

He did not go forward to meet her; his gaze was like that of one who is held spellbound; and when the young girl reached him, put her hands up to his shoulders and kissed him, first on one cheek, then the other, he trembled. But it was not due to the caress she gave him, nor to her sudden appearance, that he trembled; it was because she had called him by a long forgotten name—a name long ago left behind in some previous existence.

"Papino."

"Well—what do you think of them?" Mrs. Tillott asked, as she and Mrs. Houghton waited in the entrance hall for their motor.

"He is one of the most charming men I've ever met. I should think women would be mad about him. His smile is irresistible."

"I've never heard of any affairs. They may exist though."

"Of course they do. Women don't leave a man like that in peace. He's a gentleman too. One of the few Americans I've met recently who knows enough to refer to his other half as 'my wife' instead of calling her Mrs. Hogarth."

"Do such little things make gentlemen?"

"Culture, my dear, is a mass of tiny particles."

"And she?"

"Very successful veneer—undoubtedly applied by him."

"You think so?"

"I know it. My dear, take my word for it—you wouldn't even have to scratch her to find the Tartar."

CHAPTER XI

HOGARTH slipped away while the young people were still dancing and went to his sitting room. The pool of lamplight, falling on his desk and softly lighting the walls of books, welcomed him quietly. He sank down with a sigh of contentment, rested his head on the back of the deep sofa and gazed at the ceiling.

Papino! Good God—how that one word brought the past rushing back! How it touched the very depths of his being! Why had Jeanne thought of using it to-night! It made the whole world different for him. He smiled whimsically. Was he so old, or sensitive—or what?—that a mere word upset what he had trained himself into believing was routine!

An hour or two later a knock sounded on the door and without waiting permission to enter, the door was opened and Mary Hogarth and Jeanne stood on the threshold.

"We thought we'd still find you up, John," his wife said, advancing into the room with her arm about Jeanne. "Was the party too much of a bore for you?" She chose a cigarette from the box on his desk, lighted it and sat down.

"I wasn't needed any longer and—it was peaceful here. Well, Nini"—he reached for his daughter's hand and drew her down beside him—"you couldn't resist coming, after all. How did you leave your friend?"

"The doctor said there was no danger—at least for several days. I'm going back to her to-morrow."

Mary Hogarth frowned. "You are going to do nothing of the sort, Jeanne. Day after to-morrow is Christmas. Your father and I can't spare you that day; and we won't, will we, John?"

"But," Jeanne's eyes darkened noticeably, "you and father are perfectly well. You have each other. Mrs. Bryce is all alone in the world. My being with her would cheer her; don't you think so? Please don't insist upon my staying here."

"You sound like you were fonder of her than us. Who is she, anyhow?"

"I know very little about her. She is a widow—and quite alone. She had been teaching in a Western college before she came to our school."

The conversation was interrupted by a footman who placed a tray with a collection of bottles and glasses on the desk, and withdrew. Mary Hogarth poured some whiskey into a glass, added water and drank it thirstily.

"What's she like?" she asked, putting the glass down and looking keenly at Jeanne.

"I hardly know how to tell you—except—she's quite fascinating."

Hogarth smiled at the youthful enthusiasm; his wife received it with irritation.

"Fascinating! That don't tell me much. What's she like? Is she young or old or just commonplace middle age—like your father and me?" She ended with a laugh as she looked at Hogarth.

"I suppose you'd call her the latter," Jeanne replied, apparently seeing no humor in the remark.

"Her face is young; her hair is snow white." Her voice sank much lower, as she added: "She's the loveliest person I've ever seen."

"You said she was the English teacher; didn't you?" Mary Hogarth picked up the glass and drained what was left in it. Then she stood up. "No matter what she is, you are not going back to her for Christmas. By the way, you haven't said you liked your dress. I paid a hold-up price for it."

Jeanne's glance swept the shimmering frock and for a moment she was silent with hesitation. "It is very beautiful—but——"

"What?"

"I don't want to seem unappreciative—but—isn't it rather elaborate for me?"

"On the contrary, it's expensively simple."

"Yes—but still expensive," Jeanne insisted, with a deprecating smile.

Mary Hogarth towered over the young girl with unpleasantly curling lips. "I suppose, like all girls to-day, you think you are much more capable of choosing your clothes than your mother is!"

Jeanne held out pleading hands. "I'm awfully ungrateful. Please forgive me. It's quite the loveliest frock I've ever seen."

"But unsuitable. All right. I'll let you worry over the next one. Come along; let's go to bed."

Hogarth caught his daughter's hand as she came to kiss him good-night and held to it. "Not just yet. Mary, I want to talk to Nini a little while—if you don't mind."

"Nini!" She raised her shoulders contemptuously. "Are you going back to that silly name again? Well

—don't keep her up long; and don't let her bluff you into getting away from us Christmas." Her eyes rested in Hogarth's as if lingering there for something she expected him to say. Then: "Are you coming by my room, John?"

He looked away from her quickly. "Not to-night."

She recoiled from the rebuff, not the recoil of sensitiveness, more the falling back upon flaring anger. She stared at Hogarth through several moments of angry silence; then she turned towards Jeanne and suddenly, without a word, caught her in an almost crushing embrace.

"Have I made *you* love me?"

Jeanne, astonished at the outburst and a bit frightened, passively suffered the embrace. "What a question!" she managed to gasp. "Of course——"

"Even if I haven't made your father?"

"But—father *does* love you."

She released Jeanne and turned upon Hogarth. "No—he don't love anybody in the world—not even himself—except you. If I'd had a child of my own——"

Hogarth raised a hand quickly. His frown was arresting in its displeasure. "Mary—Jeanne is only a child."

"She's eighteen. I was a woman at that age."

"Still—we won't discuss——"

"We'll discuss anything I want to. If you'd given me a child of my own—everything would have been very different."

In spite of annoyance, Hogarth's heart leaped with joy. A child by her—his child—was too fantastic

a thought even for the evil forces that sometimes overpowered him. At least that had been spared him!

He tried to master an expression of satisfaction and turned towards Jeanne. "At least—we have Jeanne."

"She's yours—not mine."

Jeanne stood a little withdrawn from them, listening and yet trying not to. With downcast eyes and flushed face, she followed the design of the carpet with pointed foot. She had been present at such scenes several times before. They always left her puzzled and sad; they also left her with a feeling of poignant sympathy for her father.

Such a long pause followed the last words that she lifted her eyes and found her step-mother looking at her intently; and the glance was so momentarily miserable that, quite spontaneously, she went to her and put her hand timidly on her arm.

"Please—please don't think I don't love you. And don't think father doesn't. I know he does—devotedly. And even if I am not your child—you love me a little; don't you?"

Mary Hogarth's expression changed. It did not soften; but it showed a certain relief from the anger of the past few minutes. She kissed Jeanne casually and turned towards the door.

"Oh, yes—I love you. I couldn't help it. You're his."

She went out without looking again at Hogarth.

In the long pause that followed, Hogarth and Jeanne avoided each other's eyes. He shifted to the desk chair and lighted a pipe; she piled the cushions

more comfortably at the end of the sofa, sank down among them, drew her legs up under her, spread her skirt out daintily and clasped her hands behind her head. Neither of their faces was in the lamplight; they looked at each other across pleasant shadows.

Jeanne broke the long silence. "How jolly this is," she said softly. "Just you and me."

"It's a good bit of heaven." Then, after another long, peaceful, happy silence: "Nini—why did you call me Papino to-night?"

She smiled as though to herself. "I don't know exactly. I think it was spontaneous. No—not quite. Perhaps it was calculated. Of course I don't mean that—I mean intentionally done. You see—something has happened to me this autumn."

Hogarth leaned forward eagerly. "What do you mean?"

She laughed lightly. "Oh—nothing serious. It's that something inside of me has changed. Perhaps I'm maturing."

"At eighteen?"

"Perhaps too—indeed I know it—a great deal is due to Mrs. Bryce."

"Tell me about her."

Jeanne settled more comfortably against the cushions and fixed her gaze on the wall of books. Her expression was that of someone who is looking far beyond the confines of the room. Her voice had a certain eager quality in it that made her words much more significant.

"I think it must have begun at once—the first time we met—our friendship, or whatever you'd call it. It was in the class room. We were reading

Shakespeare—*The Tempest*. She read some passages to us. Her voice is the most exquisite thing I ever heard. Have you ever heard someone speak, Papino, whose voice thrilled you—went straight to your heart—and stopped there always? That's the way her voice affects me. . . . Well—the first time I heard it, it gave what she was reading an entirely new significance to me. There is everything you can imagine in her voice; it somehow made me think of flowers with dew on them—brilliant sunshine—deep, cool shadows. . . . I suppose I showed my admiration. At any rate I wanted to and didn't know exactly how to express it. You know how timid one is with new teachers. When the class was dismissed I couldn't help going up to her and telling her how much I had enjoyed her reading; and do you know, Papino, she actually appeared touched by what I had said. I fancied I saw tears in her eyes; but of course that was my imagination. But she did ask me if I'd like to come to her room some evening and make her a little visit—quite informally. . . . She has the loveliest little sitting room! You'd adore it. And it *is* so different from the other rooms at school. All the other teachers have framed prints of masterpieces and musicians and friends—you know, the traditional things that highbrows have. She hasn't any of those things. In fact, her room is very simple—but so fresh and fragrant. There are just one or two bits of exquisite old silk on the walls, two real pictures—not copies — those Eglomisé paintings under glass—from Venice, you know—and some of the most amusing ivory figurines she found in Portugal. Of course there were lots of books—all of

them looking as though they had been read through many times and had always lived with people who loved them. And flowers, yes—the flowers she picks on her long walks—and always a little bowl of marigolds in and out of season. . . . The first night I went to her room, we just talked and talked and talked. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I believe I did most of it myself. She seemed to want to find out what my tastes were. You see—she takes girls to Europe in the summer—so we talked about the different places we had been to. . . . By the way, Papino, she is taking some girls over with her this summer. I wonder if you'd let me go with her!"

Hogarth relighted his pipe. "Let's hear more about her," he answered evasively.

"You do see why I like her; don't you?"

"So far, you've told me more about her room than about her."

"Well—after that first night she asked me to come again—any time I wanted to. I wanted to the next night; so I went. Then—we began taking walks together in the afternoon. . . . She must think me an awful chatterbox. I talk all the time when I'm with her. She doesn't talk much, only—somehow—you remember what she says. The other girls are awfully jealous of my association with her. You know how girls are. They all admire her immensely; but, even if I do say it myself, she does seem to like me more. I'm terribly set up over it. Why do you suppose she does, Papino?"

"The most natural thing in the world."

Jeanne laughed gaily. "Of course you'd say that; but you are my father; she's only a stranger."

"Has she told you much about herself?"

"Hardly anything. I asked her once—lots of things—and she said there was nothing interesting to tell, that she had been left very poor when her husband died and that she had been teaching ever since. Besides teaching, she's a reader for one of the big publishing houses here in New York. She always has manuscripts on her desk which are sent to her to decide upon. Once she gave me one to read and asked me to write a criticism of it. Fancy my opinion of a manuscript! And what do you think she said when I had taken my criticism to her? Said I had extraordinary literary insight. Wasn't that corking of her!"

"I've noticed a change in the style of your letters myself."

"Have you really! I'm awfully glad! She has made me write a lot. She says I'll write for publication some day. But heavens—the things she wants me to read! I'd be reading all the rest of my life. I'm sure she has read everything that was ever written. And now—Papino—I'm going to give you the surprise of your life. She has read one of your books—the story of the slave that was brought to Virginia!"

Hogarth winced. "She must have a good memory. That was written twenty years ago."

"And she asked me why you had not written since?"

"What did you tell her?"

"I didn't know exactly what to tell her. Why haven't you?"

Hogarth rose and turned towards a shelf of books,

touching them lightly and pretending to read the titles. "I suppose—I found out I couldn't write."

"How absurd, Papino! I thought that story of the slave fascinating."

"Did your teacher find it so too?"

Jeanne's eyes clouded. "No—she didn't say exactly that. She did say though that if you'd gone on writing you'd have written some big books. Of course that sort of book is out of date to-day. People aren't reading romances now, they are reading stories of real life."

Hogarth wheeled on her and smiled. "How erudite you sound, Nini!"

"Oh, I'm only repeating her words. Have you ever written anything since the slave story?"

Hogarth turned back to the books and appeared lost in reverie. Then, as if with sudden determination, he crossed to his desk, opened a drawer, took out a key and went to the far end of the room and stooped down before a painted leather chest. Finding the lock difficult, he knelt down, and when the lid was finally raised, he remained kneeling, looking down into the chest with strangely dreaming eyes. His daughter, the softly lighted room, everything appeared to have been forgotten.

Jeanne watched him curiously. She had often admired the chest and its, what she called, jolly design of red and gold. Even as a little girl Hogarth had told her stories about it and of its original owner, a vastly amazing adventurous sea-faring rascal. He had never let her look inside, but had suggested that it held all sorts of mysterious things—Spanish gold, whatever that was—and wonderful jewels—and idols.

All the curiosity of those long ago days rushed over her. She rose without making a sound and tiptoed to her father's side and knelt down beside him.

"How musty it smells! What are those heavy envelopes, Papino?"

"Manuscripts," he answered dully.

"Yours?"

He nodded.

"You mean—they've never been published!"

"No one ever thought them good enough."

"When did you write them?"

"More than twelve years ago—when your mother was living."

"You've never written since?"

"Not a line."

"But—I don't understand. How could you stop?"

Hogarth avoided her eyes. "Some day you may understand—though I hope you never will."

"Were you so—so discouraged?"

"Perhaps that was it."

She slipped her hand through his arm and rested her head on his shoulder in a gesture meant to express her sympathy.

Hogarth tightened his hold of her and kissed her bowed head; and tears came slowly into his eyes.

"Nini—you seem to have come back to me tonight—from a long, long distance. You are just as you used to be—like the little girl I adored. What has brought you back to me?"

She hid her head on his shoulder with a sudden access of shyness.

"She did," she answered softly.

"She! Who?"

"Mrs. Bryce."

"But—what could she have to do with you and me?"

"She asked me one night whom I loved best in the world. I told her you, of course. Then she asked me if I let you know it—if I were affectionate with you—if I thought of things that would give you pleasure. And then she asked me—wasn't it funny?—what I called you."

"And you told her?"

"Father. Then she asked me if I didn't have a pet name for you—that most children had. I told her I used to call you Papino, but that my stepmother thought that a silly name and didn't like me to use it. And do you know—she said she thought Papino was a lovely name. I don't believe she had ever heard it before. She said she imagined you would still like me to call you that. Would you?"

"It means everything to me."

"Really! Why?"

"It brings back—it makes live again—a time when I was very happy."

She drew away from him so as to see his face. Looking into his eyes, hers grew troubled. "Papino! I thought you were perfectly happy! Why aren't you? Haven't you everything in the world?"

He looked down in the chest as though it were an empty abyss. "I suppose I have. At any rate, I have you. . . . Did the questions this Mrs. Bryce asked you make you come back to me?"

"They made me ask myself what I had ever done

for you; and I found I had never done anything. But I'm going to—from now on."

"What are you going to do, Nini?"

Her seriousness fled from her. "Wait and see." Then: "What's in that package? It looks as if it had never been opened."

"A returned manuscript—the last book I wrote."

She reached for the package, turned it over in her hands, and all the while her eyes were sparkling with an idea which had just been born.

"Papino—I wonder if you'd let me read it!"

"You'd be bored and think me an awful dub to write a thing like that."

"Perhaps I should," she answered teasingly. "Anyway—may I read it?"

Hogarth sought refuge in a deprecating gesture. "If you want to—why not?"

She sprang up, still holding the package in her hand as though she had finally got possession of a long-coveted prize. Then, as though fearing a change of mind on his part, she hurried towards the door with the package held behind her. With her hand on the knob, she stopped.

"Papino—do you really object to my returning to the school for Christmas day?"

"Of course I do. Think what a cheerless Christmas it will be for me without you!"

This brought a frown and vastly troublesome indecisions. "Still, Papino—you are here with my stepmother. You and she have each other. Mrs. Bryce has no one. The other teachers are not frightfully sympathetic. She would be all alone."

Hogarth looked at her through a long pause.

"Nini—I don't believe you mind leaving me at all. I thought you were going to begin doing things for me. Is this the way?"

Her eyes grew steadily more troubled. This was one of the really trying moments of her life. She was sure nothing would ever again be quite so complicated.

"I suppose it does sound selfish—I suppose it *is* selfish—but, Papino—somehow—I'll be miserable if you don't let me go."

"Very well then—go."

"You are angry with me?"

"No, not angry—only hurt."

She sighed heavily and leaned against the door, a charming picture of youthful contriteness.

"Oh, dear—life *is* so complicated!"

Hogarth could no longer suppress amusement. He laughed outright.

"Nini—don't bother. Of course go. But come back to me the day after."

She ran to him with grateful kisses.

"Indeed I will. I'll even come back Christmas night. Now—to-morrow—we'll go shopping together and buy her all the lovely flowers we can find—and a huge basket of wonderful fruit—and a dozen boxes of chocolates—and marshmallows! She adores marshmallows."

Hogarth smiled whimsically. "I thought you said she had appendicitis."

CHAPTR XII

THE next three months were emotionally turbulent for Hogarth. No one knew, not even his wife or his daughter—though the latter had much to do with the cause—that he was passing through a crisis that might lead in almost any direction.

The first step had been taken the night Jeanne carried off the manuscript; the second was when she had returned from school, not the day after Christmas, as she had promised, but three days later. Her impatient attempts, upon reaching the house, to have a word alone with her father had ended with his carrying her up to his sitting room.

"All right, Nini, fire away. Make your confession." He closed the door after them, took her hands in his and looked closely into her eager face. "You are about to explode with something. What is it?"

She glanced at the door. "You are sure we are alone?"

He nodded. "Is it such a grave secret?"

"I don't want anyone but you to know."

"Very well. Let's have it."

"I read your manuscript to her."

"To your teacher, Mrs. Bryce?"

She nodded significantly.

"I thought you had something to tell me."

"I have—heaps. She made me read it very slowly —very carefully. She thought about it a long time

before she said anything. Then," her eyes danced with the untempered happiness of eighteen years. "Guess what she said!"

"That's easy enough. About twenty publishers said it twelve years ago."

"She said it was a magnificent novel—that it would be an immediate and great success. She said she would like to send it to the publishing house she reads for. She asked me to get permission from you to send it to them. And Papino—I wonder if you are going to be frightfully angry with me!"

"Have I ever been?"

"No—but this time—well, I told her you had already given me permission to do whatever I liked with it."

Hogarth laughed quietly. "So that is the great excitement!"

"Yes. And you don't mind?"

"Of course not. It can't possibly make any difference. What happened years ago will happen again."

"I told her you said everyone had refused it. She said that meant nothing, that this was the psychological moment for a novel like yours. She has even suggested to the publishers that it be used as a serial for their magazine. They are looking for one right now."

A fortnight later a letter from the publishers informed Hogarth that they wanted the story at once for the magazine and later for book publication. The price offered was beyond anything he had ever expected. Prices, as well as taste, had changed in twelve years.

His first reaction to this offer was very bitter resentment. Why had this not come when it would have saved him?—when his life was still untarnished with shame, with utter abasement? Why had it come when there was no further hope for him—when it was too late to repair spiritual shipwreck? He lowered his head in his hands; the publisher's offer fell to the floor; he felt like a man whose death sentence has been commuted after the execution. He remained thus through many hours; and during those hours a great change in his life took place. When he went down to dinner that evening he was already another man. There was a new expression on his face; he appeared to have thrown off premature age; there was a glow of youth in his eyes that had not been there for many years.

He called on the publishers the next day, heard praise that he had once so longed for and had given up all hope of ever receiving, signed the contract and received the cheque—more money than he had ever possessed, more, much more than his first book had brought him.

That night, in his own room, he gave himself up with abandon to a crisis of fevered imaginings. He dared not confess, even to himself, what he was feeling at the moment. Everything was undefined emotion, a weird sort of exultation that carried him out of himself and into a world of his own creation.

The first installment of the book appeared in two months. He said nothing to his wife about the story and its publication until the magazine actually lay on the library table; then he picked it up, handed it to her and remarked casually that he had begun

to write again. She had as casually answered that she never understood why he hadn't been doing it all along—and laid the magazine aside without looking at it. He never referred to it again in her presence.

All during this period letters from Jeanne had been constant and enthusiastic. She sent a telegram to him the day the magazine appeared with the story and signed herself "Papino's Egeria." The letter that followed said: "I'm so excited about the serial, I don't know what to do with myself. I've shown it to all the girls in the school, all the teachers, even to the groom who fetches my horse in the morning. You should see the pride on my brow when I grow whole inches taller, point to the magazine with your name on the cover and say, in tremendously dramatic tones—'That is my father.' I don't see how it's humanly possible to wait for the second installment. Aren't the illustrations horrid! But they always are. Mrs. Bryce asked me to thank you for your letter and to tell you she had nothing really to do with it, that it was all the result of good work. That doesn't sound a bit like her; she isn't a bit stuffy. I wonder if you are as excited as I am!"

He was, in a way, but it did not show outwardly. He was too filled with unleashed, subjective emotions, to need any physical outlet. And he knew, too, that he must keep a steady control of himself—for he was inevitably approaching crisis.

When a letter from Jeanne arrived, announcing her visit for the Easter holidays, Hogarth felt that the moment for decisions was upon him. She had again mentioned her wish to go abroad with Mrs.

Bryce that summer. The trip was being arranged and she would have to give a definite answer the following week. She knew her step-mother would oppose the trip; but would he? She admitted that it was rather foolish of her, she knew Europe so well already, but it would be instructive—wouldn't it?—to see things with someone like Mrs. Bryce. The trip included Spain, France and Northern Italy. She had never seen Spain. She might as well confess she was just dying to go. What did he think about it?

"We must begin planning for the summer," he said to his wife the night the letter arrived. "Don't you think it about time?"

They were sitting alone in their box at the opera. It was an off night, the repetition of an opera which had not been well received but which Hogarth had found interesting and had wished to see a second time. His wife had gone with him in lieu of something more amusing to do. She hated the opera except on gala nights. This night the parterre boxes were conspicuously empty.

Her bored eyes came back to his quickly. "Have you thought of anything?" she asked.

Hogarth avoided the question. "I had a letter from Jeanne to-day."

"I had one too. Of course she mentioned that absurd idea of going abroad with the teacher!"

"Yes. I want to talk to you about that. What do you think of it?"

"I don't think about it at all. In the first place, we've never seen the woman. We don't know anything about her. Besides—why send Jeanne to Europe when we both want her here with us?"

"She seems awfully keen about going."

"A silly school girl idea! The woman probably wants to make a lot of money out of her on the trip. I wrote Jeanne to get this plan out of her head, once and for all."

"I'm sorry you did that."

"Why?"

"I'm inclined to let her go."

"You!" Her exclamation was full of sincere amazement. "You are the last person in the world I thought would agree to it. Don't you want her with us this summer?"

"That's a useless question. You know I do. I'm thinking of *her* and what she wants to do."

"You can't think of letting her go away for months with a woman we know nothing about!"

"It's a very simple matter to find out all we need know from the principal of the school; or Jeanne might bring her down to see us."

"You aren't serious?"

"I am."

"Well—I won't give my consent. My mind's made up to that."

The lowering of lights and the beginning of the overture—Hogarth had come early so as to hear the opera as a complete work—interrupted their conversation. All through the music and the voices, however, plans ranged themselves more and more definitely before Hogarth. With the first *entr-acte* he returned at once to the subject.

"There was another thing I wanted to mention to you, Mary. I'm thinking a little of going to Europe myself this summer."

Her glance became probing. He was looking away from her and his expression appeared rather casual. It was the first time he had ever mentioned a plan to her without introducing the subject with "What do you think?" or "Let's go to this place," thus leaving the ultimate decision to her. She was quick to note the change of method; her eyes showed that she interpreted it as being a bit momentous.

"What part of Europe?"

His answer, still with averted face, came quiet and steady. "Italy—Capri."

Her lips tightened. "You said you never wanted to see that place again."

"Yes—I did say that. Recently—I've changed my mind."

"What made you change it?"

He turned and faced her; his expression and voice, as he spoke, were full of calm determination. "Mary—please understand what I am going to say to you. It's rather hard to tell you—but we've always been frank. You demand it. It has had much to do with making our combination successful. I have never told you that I received a rather large cheque for the story that is now running in the magazine. As you know, it is the first money of my own that I've had for many years."

"That isn't true. You have your own bank account. You've had it ever since we were married."

"That is your money; not mine. You have done everything for me—for us; Jeanne and I have never wanted for a thing; you've been the most generous woman in the world; you've questioned nothing; you——"

"What's all this leading up to, John?" she cut in, impatient.

His glance shifted and came back to her. "Just this, Mary. I want to send Jeanne on the trip this summer. I want to make a short one myself. And I want to pay for both of them myself."

She closed her large black fan and looked across the audience. Her eyes were slightly narrowed in concentration.

"Does all this mean that you want to go alone?"

"I think I had better."

"Why?"

He was groping for some explanation that would not be flagrantly harsh. "You see—if I am to begin writing again, and I suppose I am—I've already had an offer for my next book—I'll have to begin planning a little. A trip by myself will give me the chance to think over the story. I think I'll go and return by the Mediterranean route."

"Will Capri help you plan books?"

"I have a great desire—it has only come to me lately—to open the little villa there, gather my things together, and——" He left the sentence unfinished. Neither his desires nor his plans, at the moment, went further.

"You never told me you had kept the villa on!"

"Why should I? It meant nothing to you."

"You've had it all this time?"

"Yes. The lease amounts to nothing. Everything I own in the world is there. I didn't want to move my things or give up the little place."

She listened attentively, not missing a word or an inflection; her attention was almost painfully alert.

When he had finished, the lines about her mouth tightened in the expression he had learned to avoid seeing.

"Then—you don't want me along?"

He had given up, years ago, marveling at her unsensitive insistence. Familiarity had accustomed him to it and robbed it of its novelty. He let her last question go unanswered.

"Is Jeanne to meet you there?"

He started. She had put her finger on a plan which he himself had hardly yet formulated.

"Her itinerary, she tells me, includes only Northern Italy."

"What do you suppose I'm going to do all summer without either of you?"

"What would you like to do?"

"Nothing—without you."

Again lowered lights put an end to their words.

When the second act was ended Mary Hogarth rose and said she would not remain longer. Hogarth accompanied her to the motor and then returned to the box alone. In spite of the disturbing tone of their talk—or perhaps because of it—he had decided to remain through the last act.

When he reached home two hours later, the footman told him that Mrs. Hogarth was awaiting him in her boudoir and wished him to come there at once. He went to his own room first, changed into smoking jacket and slippers, lighted a cigarette and turned on the lamp on his desk. It had been his intention to write his impression of a second hearing of the opera; and he even went so far as to spread out some sheets of paper; then he stopped. If she

were waiting for him he had better go at once and get the interview over with. His face, as he turned towards the door, bore the habitual mask of calm self control.

She was reclining on a deep divan in one of those extraordinary sensuous *robes de chambre* she affected—a mass of chiffons and embroideries and laces, heavily scented and flagrantly suggestive of intimacy. A half empty bottle of champagne in a cooler was placed on a low table beside the divan. Her face was flushed; her eyes had an unpleasantly brilliant gleam in them. The old appellation of "shiny" eyes flashed into Hogarth's thoughts as he entered the room.

She raised her hands with a gesture of welcome which let the draperies fall back and show her bare, handsome arms; her smile was full of sensual confession.

"Come here, John, and sit by me."

He went to the divan and sat down in the space she had made for him. She put both arms about him and drew him almost roughly against her. Her warm, moist lips rested against his cheek.

"You think I'm going to let you go to Europe alone. Well—I'm not. Get that out of your head right now."

He forced himself to answer her lightly. "Haven't you had enough of me in twelve years? I should think it would be a relief to be rid of me for a while. Some people say a man and his wife should not live together over six months a year."

"Some people are fools, too. Six months! I don't want to be separated from you six days. Take some

champagne. There's plenty left." She released her hold of him, poured a glass of champagne and held it playfully to his lips.

"Not to-night. I'm going to write."

"No you aren't. You are going to stay right here with me."

He moved quickly away to a chair and sank in it. Three months ago he would not have resisted her passion. In a way, he had found himself dominated by it; it was so tremendous, so all-embracing and—so deadening. During the first years of their married life he had found himself actually seeking it, deliberately creating it to fill the void of the spiritual life cast aside. In its grip he found that nothing else mattered—nothing else existed. It dulled a too sensitive realization of the present; it dimmed wounding memories.

To-night he saw it in another light; he saw the depths to which he had sunk; he realized more fully than ever what sort of a creature he had become. It was only with supreme effort that he kept what he was feeling from showing in his face.

She drank the champagne he had refused and, tossing back her disordered hair, slipped from the sofa, knelt beside his chair and caught hold of both his hands.

"John—what's the matter? You've changed lately."

"Isn't that your imagination?"

"I haven't got any. You said that yourself. Are you getting tired of me? Is there some other woman?"

He laughed easily; and her face softened with the convincing answer.

"That's fortunate," she said, very slowly.

"For me—or for her?" He kept up the lighter tone.

He turned away quickly from her cruel smile.

"For her. You know me well enough to know that I'm the last woman in the world to let another woman come between you and me. I don't accept anything as what you'd call inevitable. What I want is the inevitable."

Hogarth nodded. "I remember your telling me once that you had never failed. I didn't believe such a thing possible then. I know it is, now."

"That was when you thought I'd never win you. It *was* the biggest fight I ever put up. I didn't stop at anything to get you; did I? And I won't stop at anything to keep you." She pressed her cheek tight against his. "Do you know how much I love you?"

"I couldn't help knowing it. Sometimes—always—I wonder why you do."

"I don't. I just accept it—feel it. That's enough for me. I wish it was enough for you. But you—you are always splitting hairs. Haven't you ever accepted a thing without questions?"

"Perhaps long ago—when I was young."

"Young!" She scoffed. "What do you call forty? It's the best time of all for a man."

"You are much younger than I."

"I'm the same age."

"I mean mentally. Do you know—you are nothing still but a child."

She frowned and drew away from him. "You've said that a thousand times. It makes me tired. I don't believe you think anybody in the world has as much sense as you have."

Again he laughed, this time ingratiatingly. He wanted the scene over with. He got up, lighted a fresh cigarette and made a movement towards the door.

She sprang up and barred the way. "You shan't go."

"I must. It's late."

The gleam of anger in her eyes deepened with his insistence. She leaned against the door and faced him. "I want to know more about this plan of yours."

"I've told you everything."

"When are you going?"

She forced decision upon him; with the realization he felt immense relief; he no longer thought vaguely. "Next month."

"Next month. All right. I'm going with you."

Hogarth started at the tone in which she hurled the words at him. He looked at her a few moments silently; then very quietly, very firmly, he took hold of her hands and half led, half urged her towards the divan. When she had sunk down there, he released her hands and stood before her, meeting her glance with the determination which he had tried before and found effective.

"Mary—we've carried out our contract for twelve years. We are going to do so on to the end. You've never failed to meet all of your promises. You have done everything you said you would do—and much

more. You did what you said you would for Jeanne —you gave her back her health—you saved her life —you've made her what the world calls an heiress. In return, I have tried to do everything you expected of me. There should be no doubts or suspicions existing between us at this late day. Do you understand me clearly? I trust you implicitly; I expect you to trust me. We must not let the first thing I plan to do without you bring about misunderstandings. Do you remember you once said that you would not interfere with anything I should want to do? Do you remember that?"

She nodded sullenly and lowered her eyes.

"Well—I expect you now to live up to that promise. You must not oppose my trip. I don't believe you will, either, when you have thought it over calmly."

"But, John—I don't want you to leave me. I want to go with you."

Still holding her glance and forcing his determination upon her, he said firmly: "And I wish to go alone—and I mean to."

She turned away, picked up the bottle and poured the rest of the champagne into a glass. She drank it without looking at him. When she had finished she threw the glass across the room. It smashed on the tiles of the fireplace and broke into a hundred pieces. Then she laughed, threatening, ominous sort of laughter which had no suggestion of vanquished determination in it.

"All right. Go."

CHAPTER XIII

HOGARTH stared ahead at the sharp outline of the island. How strangely unchanged it appeared; how, somehow, silently eternal! He only was fluid; it was static. Twelve years had left no perceptible mark upon it; perhaps even twelve centuries had not changed it materially; yet he—he drew in his breath with sharp pain, almost fear—he was an old man, at least in comparison with the enthusiastic, carefree, happy young fellow who had first gone there twenty years before.

He had arrived in Naples early that morning, coming by the Southern route. Ischia had risen out of the mist to greet him; then Capri, on the right, an unfamiliar outline to him as seen from the sea; then small islands, the precipitous point of Posillipo, and at last smiling Naples and brooding Vesuvius. Noisy fruit vendors in row boats, naked boys diving for coins, vociferous coachmen and guides, bored custom officials, vast cheerless chambers of the Custom House filled with complaining, impatient travelers, and finally—blazing sunlight and the familiar, pungent, unescapable scent of Naples. Antonia had once said that the smell of Naples was its most personal characteristic, a passionate blending of the scent of goats, oranges and incense. She had laughingly admitted she adored it.

Antonia!

Hogarth threw himself down on the seat of the

shabby cab and shut his eyes. Why had he come back! Already he felt something clutching at his heart. The wound was wide open again and blood gushing forth. Years had accomplished nothing. His heart was as immutable as that silent, unchanged shape across the bay. He had only to lift the mantle that shrouded his inner life to realize the truth. The wound was as raw as the day it was inflicted. Yet he had come back to everything that would break down resolution and increase suffering. Ah—well . . . The Capri boat! Yes, the same one, with perhaps a new coat of paint, probably many since those old days—and surely many more German tourists. They filled the decks with Baedeckers, Panama hats and flowing veils. Castellamare and the chain of little towns! Sorrento, the stretch of open sea and—Capri!

Antonia!

Hogarth strained forward and searched through the crowd gathered on the little quai to meet the evening boat. So many times she had been there to meet him and, shunning the funicula, they had climbed the winding road together. Should he take the funicula to-day, just as a mere tourist would do, or—. He struck out up the road. A gnarled, aged olive tree met him at the first turn and smiled sadly at him. He sat down on a stone beneath its silver leaves and lowered his head in his hands.

Antonia!

He hurried across the Piazza to avoid meeting old acquaintances—there must be some there he had known—and turned into the winding, narrow road that led towards the villa. Dusk softened the out-

lines now and he welcomed its protecting veil. He would surely be unrecognized now and could pass along without the chance meetings he so dreaded at this moment.

A man came towards him, walking with the aid of a stick—an old man with a look of utter dejection. As he approached Hogarth peered at him and started with fleeting recognition. There was vague surprise in the stranger's eyes too. Both seemed on the point of speaking; then each passed on his way. Hogarth sighed with relief. He had found something in the old man's personality that had vaguely suggested the doctor they had had during Jeanne's illness. But surely it could not be he!

At last the villa gate. He pulled the bell and listened to the tinkling sound with every nerve taut. Would there be any response? Would that bit of wood, shabby with green, scaling paint, ever open? And if it opened, to what would he be admitted?—only deserted chambers—the vast desolation of his heart.

"Ah—Signore! Benvenuto!"

The smiling, round, pleasant face appeared weirdly familiar. Through a circle of years he found resemblance. Yes, it was Emilia, grown fat and comfortable and matronly. She closed the gate and launched forth on an avalanche of questions and narrative. How was the Signore? Where had he been all these long, long years? Yes, she had lived in the villa, every day and every night—ever since he had gone away and left her in charge. He would find that she had kept it clean and bright. It was just as he had left it. Not a week had passed without her

opening every window, letting in the sunlight, clearing away the dust. Yes, she had received his letters regularly. The last one, the one in which he had announced his return, had come the month before. She had so wanted to tell everyone, spread the glad tidings from one end of the island to the other, but she had not; she had kept the silence he had asked of her. And the *bambina*—the *caruccia piccinina!* Was she well? She must be a woman now—tall like the Signore? Ah—how the years slipped by—and how old everyone was growing! Not the Signore—brazen flattery now, thought Hogarth—he was just as young as when he had left. The Madonna had been kind to him. Would he go in now and see the house? Everything was ready for him.

Hogarth entered. Nothing suggested a long unused abode. There were no musty scents, no accumulation of dust, no feeling of empty, uninhabited rooms. There were bowls of fresh flowers, marigolds as of yore, familiar trinkets, books—everything exactly as he had left it twelve years before. The effect made for weirdness and unreality. It was not natural that inanimate things should remain so untouched and life be so terrifically mutable.

He wandered from room to room, his amazement deepening all the while. Three books lay on the table which he remembered he had been using for reference; a silver ash-tray with a Roman coin imbedded in the bottom was placed beside a familiar box for cigarettes. He opened the box hastily and received a shock. It was empty. But on the piano, opened as though it had just been played on, was a sheet of music—Debussy's *Clair de Lune*. Antonia

had often played it during those peaceful hours after dinner when candle light and luminous glow mingled softly in the room.

Pots of flourishing plants bordered the tiled steps that led to the second floor. Should he go up there! He brushed aside hesitation and began the ascent. His own bedroom was fresh and fragrant. The bed was ready for the night. Spotless linen and soft pillows invited to peaceful sleep. As if sleep could ever come to him again! Then, adjoining, Antonia's room. The Umbrian Madonna, above the bed, was smiling as placidly as ever. The scent of marigolds, arranged in a bowl on her dressing table, smote him sharply. Beyond was Nini's room. Each one was ready for its occupant. Each one was filled with the personal touch that years could never eradicate.

He hurried back to the lower floor and out to the terrace. The rickety willow bench which they had bought second-hand in Naples welcomed him. He sat down. Its groaning squeak brought back the fun it had afforded them. How they had laughed at its constant protests! How many evenings it had held them while they watched the lights change and shift and deepen into night—just as they were doing now! Everything was the same; everything always would be the same. He had been dreaming for twelve years. This was reality; the other had been mad fancies.

Emilia announced dinner. He went into the dining-room and sat down. The flat Venetian bowl with roses floating in the shallow water smiled at him. Familiar china, silver he had grown to love through daily association, the same glasses, the same

wine jugs, even the same wine—*Lagrime Cristi*—Tears of Christ. How quiet and simple and peaceful—how intensely sweet! Coffee on the terrace—again on the squeaking bench; the gorgeous purple night about him. Ah—how beautiful it was; how beautiful and caressing! How he loved it! Good God, what a miserable life he had been leading away from all this! Luxurious hotels, hordes of servants, magnificent houses, endless acquaintances and no friends, restlessness, complexity of desires and diversions, nothing but ceaseless movement, on and on,—and towards what? And all the while peace and tranquillity—and most of all simplicity—simplicity of body and spirit—had been awaiting him here.

He sprang up and cast out his hands in a gesture meant to throw all those twelve years completely away from him—forever—forever. He would never return to that life. It was got rid of now, passed, cast away once for all. All the riches in the world, all the empty luxuries, would never move him again. He had enough of them, too much. No matter what depths of poverty might crush down upon him, he would never return to that existence; it was a thousand times more sordid, more damning, than any poverty.

Without object, he turned back into the house and sat down almost automatically at the long table where he had so often written. Hardly aware of what he did, he opened the old leather portfolio and drew out some sheets of yellowed paper. Then he opened a drawer and found a pencil. Each gesture was performed with the precision of habit. He was moving in old ruts; nothing made the result awk-

ward. The pencil began to move across the paper of its own will; words formed themselves; sentences came into being.

"Antonia! You are surely here beside me. I feel your presence everywhere. When I lift my eyes and look about the room, I feel that you are looking at it with me. Everything I touch I know that you are touching. The chair I sit in feels the warmth of your soft body; the books thrill at the touch of your gentle fingers; the marigolds in the vase beside me lift up their gleaming faces and smile at you; the black and white slabs of the pavement feel the pressure of your dainty feet . . .

"You are everywhere—but most of all you are in my heart. Do you know how preciously I guard you there? Of course you do; you know everything; you always have . . .

"To-night you are nearer me than ever before—nearer even than when your hand was clasped in mine and I felt your head warm against my shoulder. I know that you are listening now and hearing every word . . .

"How we have cheated the gods! They thought they could separate us. Foolish gods! There is no power great enough to separate two souls made for each other. We are one. Neither of us could exist alone. Eternity holds us bound together . . .

"It is you who have made all these endless, dreary years possible. You have given me courage. Without you it would have been impossible. At moments, when I seemed to lose my way, when everything was dark and hopeless, you would breathe upon me, counsel me to lift up my head, and I would obey.

Twelve endless years—horrible years—sordid years —with only one reality—the one you left me—Jeanne. She made my burden a necessity—but she also made it worth while—and fruitful. If it had to be done again, with my eyes wide open to all it meant, it would be done again. I knew what I was doing; I did not take the step blindly; I knew that you wanted me to do it; I knew that nothing else was possible . . .

"But all that is over now. I have come back to you. Stay beside me, beloved. We can be so happy together—just this way. This shall be our sanctuary. This shall be the communion of our souls. We will let no one enter here. We will live here alone—on and on—until——"

Hogarth dropped the pencil; he could write no more. Scalding tears fell upon the written pages. For the first time since he, in the very same room, had bowed in submission to the inevitable, he felt to the deepest dregs the bitterness of hopeless existence. And years still remained to be lived through!

The exaltation of that first night of Hogarth's return to Capri gradually burned itself out in the realities of life. The overwhelming rush of memories did not bring the peace expected. The villa, the scenes, the long walks were too fraught with suggestion. Every moment of the long days, every hour of the white nights, were a continual living over of those eight years with Antonia. A week there convinced him that the happiness he expected was not to be found there; even the determination to make the best of the lot vouchsafed him would soon

ebb away under these influences and leave him in a hopeless pit of despair. If he remained there more complete shipwreck was sure to overtake him. He must go away and go at once. With this decision came another. The villa must be given up, the things sold, and everything that pertained to that part of his life cleared away. As long as anything existed there would be the call to return. If everything were wiped out of existence the call might still remain, but there would be nothing to return to. He saw this as the only possible way of facing the future.

The second week he set to work to carry out these decisions. He began collecting a few books which he wished to carry away with him. In searching for a volume he came to an abrupt stop before a shelf on which Antonia had kept her favorite books. He hesitated. How could he give them into the hands of unknown people who might never appreciate them, might not handle them gently as she always had! His hand moved caressingly over the bindings, indecision still upon him. He drew one from the row and read the title, "Emma." He smiled. How they had argued over Jane Austen!—Antonia admiring, he scoffing. The pages fell apart at a marked place. A folded letter, of heavy blue paper, lay before him. He started. The bold handwriting was so painfully familiar. What was it doing here? Had he left it there? Should he read it again and live over that tempestuous period? No—a thousand times no. The words sprang at him. Surely they were not written to him. Then—to whom? Antonia? The date caught his attention. He began to recall exact dates. The letter was written the day after he had

gone to Naples—the day Antonia had sailed away forever. He began to read:

My dear Mrs. Hogarth:

Can you meet me on the Tragara this morning? I will be there about noon. Don't bother about answering—just come.

MARY WATSON.

Hogarth returned the book to its place and read the note again. What could she have wished to see Antonia about? Why should she have sought her the day after the return from the yachting trip—and the day he had gone away? Quick fear had hold of him. The note trembled in his hand. Was there some connection between this note and Antonia's death? The fear tightened about his heart. He folded the note carefully and slipped it into his pocket. He looked about for his hat and went out on the terrace. The glare sent him quickly back into the room. He stood undecided and agitated. An avalanche of doubts and questions and suspicions came down upon him. He tried to scout vague, sinister suggestions and failed. At one moment he thought of sending a telegram to his wife; he went so far as to sit down and pick up a pen. What nonsense! What could he ask in a telegram? What could she reply? He ran over the names of the people he had known in Capri, especially those Antonia had known well; then he remembered he had made no inquiries since his arrival. He had no idea who was living there now. He called Emilia and asked questions about old friends. Hardly any remained—only the doctor. The Doctor! Ah—perhaps——. At least he would

go see him. He would go at once. He looked at his watch. Yes—it was a good time to find him at home—just half an hour before the luncheon hour. He hurried out of the house as though to keep a forgotten appointment.

He was told, when he reached the villa he had remembered as Doctor Catazzo's, that the family had not lived there for a long time; their home was now in the imposing villa with the fine gardens on the Tragara. He hurried along and found himself wondering over the success which must have come to the Capri physician to have made such a pretentious home possible.

In a vast room darkened by green shutters, he came face to face with the old man he had passed in the street the first evening of his arrival, and he felt a sharp sensation of shock at the careworn, aged countenance that now confronted him, neither gracious nor smiling, as he had remembered it. Surely great success had brought neither health nor happiness. His thoughts shot back to a handsome, dark man, with vivid Italian coloring and the large hot eyes of his race; instead, here was an old man, stooping, sallow, listless and somehow obviously unfriendly.

"I saw you in the street," Hogarth began in an attempt to hide his surprise. "I thought I knew you but was not sure. I am John Hogarth. Do you remember me?"

"I was not sure I remembered you, either," the Doctor replied coldly.

A wave of depression swept over Hogarth. Was it possible that he too had changed as this man

had! "You have been quite well, I hope. And your family?"

The old man held out his hand with a gesture touchingly expressive of emptiness. "I am alone. I have no family now. My wife died five years ago."

"But—I remember your children."

"One by one—gone. This house killed them all. I mean——" in answer to Hogarth's mute inquiry—"when prosperity came—happiness fled."

Hogarth felt a warm flow of sympathy for the stricken, lonely man; he held out his hand and pressed the hot, dry wrinkled one; then he saw the old man's glance return to his face and remain there with curiously intent scrutiny.

"I expected you to return some day—and I dreaded it. That is the reason I did not speak to you in the street. I knew you would come to see me. I have been waiting for you. Many times I thought of writing you; then I would convince myself that it was unnecessary. You were sure to find out some day without my telling you."

"Find out! What?"

"The trick I played on you."

"You!"

He moved towards a table and stood a few moments fumbling with some books. Hogarth's surprise had evidently caught him unprepared. After a long pause he asked: "Didn't you find out everything from the doctors when you went away from here?"

"I don't understand what you mean?"

"I'm talking about your little girl. What did they say?"

"About her health? Nothing very much. It was extraordinary how she began to improve as soon as we got her away from here. Was it entirely a matter of climate?"

The tired old eyes were still searching Hogarth's. "Didn't they find anything—beyond what I had told you—the matter with her?"

"As a matter of fact, I think not. You see, when she left here, she went with Mrs. Watson. I did not see her for several weeks later. When I did see her she had improved so much that I hardly knew her. My wife told me——"

The old man's eyes blazed up with sudden fire. "Ah—then you married her!"

Hogarth's astonishment increased. "I married Mrs. Watson soon after leaving here. Didn't you know?"

There was an evident effort on the old man's part to conquer some emotion. He picked up a book and began turning the pages quickly. "You must forgive me for not knowing. We hear so little of the outside world here. I have never heard of either of you since you left here." Then, almost anxiously: "Is she—your wife—coming here?"

"No."

"Ah!"

The tinkle of the gate bell broke on the silence that had fallen between the two men. The Doctor started with relief.

"A patient. You must excuse me."

"One moment, please. I came here actually to

ask you a question. It is so long ago—it may sound foolish to you—but do you remember, just before my wife's death, that she had returned from Switzerland? Ah, you do? And did you see her before—before she was drowned?"

The Doctor's eyes contracted with effort. "I saw her that same day."

"Where?"

"She was on her way to keep an appointment with someone on the Tragara."

Hogarth nodded quickly. "Yes—with my present wife. So she did keep that appointment? That is what I want to know."

"She meant to keep it. I remember—she was not well. She had a fever. She asked me to call that afternoon and prescribe for her. Yes, I told her not to remain out in the sun, to go home and not keep the appointment."

"But she did not take your advice?"

"I think not. She went on towards the Tragara."

A servant came to the door and announced that a patient was waiting in the next room. The Doctor held out his hand. "Goodby."

"But——" Hogarth stood aghast at the peremptory dismissal. There were a thousand questions he must still ask this man. "I can't go yet. You must tell me what you meant."

"What I meant?"

"You spoke of a trick."

"Oh, that!" The wrinkled face broke into a weary smile, followed by a sigh and a long pause. Hogarth felt that the old man was struggling with indecisions. Finally he said: "There is so much

that belongs to that period of my life—and so much that has happened since. Would you mind very much if I tell you that I do not like to recall it."

"But—if it is something I should know."

The old, withered eyes were full of pain now. "If you don't know already—it can do no good now."

Hogarth held out his hand. "When can I see you again?"

"I am leaving here to-morrow."

"For very long?"

"Who knows? Perhaps forever. I hope so."

Again Hogarth felt a surge of sympathy. In a way, he sensed a similarity between this man's utter despair and the bitterness of his own life.

"Please let me express my sympathy," he said impetuously. "I have lost too. I know what it means."

"No—no—I don't want sympathy. We are all punished according to our sins." He went towards the door, obviously wishing to bring the interview to an end; but before extending his hand again, his eyes were once more searching Hogarth's. "You spoke of loss. Your daughter——"

"I meant my first wife. My daughter is quite well."

"She is strong?"

"Yes. Not tremendously robust—but that is not her nature."

"There is nothing organically wrong?"

"No—I'm sure of that."

The old man pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. The gesture and his expression

were full of intense relief. The pressure of his hand in parting was vastly different from that of his greeting.

Hogarth walked slowly back to the villa. The suspicions of an hour ago had grown a hundred fold. This talk with the doctor had created them in another direction. He felt himself falling into a mesh of vague, unformulated fears that was wrapping itself tightly about his heart. He stopped in the shadow of a pine and found himself gasping for breath. All life seemed suddenly to have gone out of the air.

Emilia met him at the gate of the villa and handed him a telegram. He tore it open with unsteady fingers.

"Mrs. Bryce is bringing us all to Naples this week. Be sure to meet us there. May I spend a week with you in Capri. Love. Jeanne."

CHAPTER XIV

"PAPINO—here I am!" Jeanne rushed towards Hogarth across the hotel hall. "Did you get my telegram? No. How fortunate you came to this hotel! You see, we arrived last night—a day ahead of time. I've been up since early morning with my eyes glued on the bay of Naples—watching for your boat to come in. I'm so glad you came straight here. Suppose I'd have had to wait here all alone all day! I think I'd have taken the Capri boat and gone over there without you. Are we going this afternoon? How beautiful it is here! So intense and smelly and somehow lurid! I adore it. I'm trying to remember—and can't—not a single thing!"

Hogarth held her in his arms, fresh, fragrant, all in white, while tourists in the hotel hall looked on admiringly. Jeanne was quite different from the travelers they were accustomed to see; she appeared to them most unsuitably clothed for travel and sight-seeing, yet they admired her at the same time as they criticized; it would have been immensely refreshing to have brought along fresh, crisp, dainty things to change into in the oppressive heat.

Hogarth looked at her a long time, intently, hungrily.

"You are all right, Nini?" There was frank anxiety in his voice.

"Of course I am. You look as though you expected to find me a sort of puny crock."

"You haven't been traveling too much? You aren't tired?"

She laughed gaily. "Papino—what's the matter? Am I not always well—the wellest person in the world?"

He drew her arm through his and led her towards a chair. Still holding her hand he sat down and gazed at her. "I *was* a bit worried," he admitted, with a deep sigh of relief. Her vivid, glowing face scouted all the sinister thoughts of the past week.

"But why? I wrote you that——"

"Just my imagination, I suppose—fired by the old doctor we used to have at Capri. He asked so many questions about your health and appeared so relieved when I told him you had grown into a strong woman."

Again Jeanne laughed. The sound of her gaiety refreshed Hogarth like cool, sparkling water. "Did he expect me to remain indefinitely ill?"

Hogarth laughed with her. "As a matter of fact, I think he did. But tell me—why are you here alone? Where is Mrs. Bryce and the rest of the party?"

"Gone to Pompeii—at the crack of dawn. And then on to Sorrento and Amalfi—and perhaps Sicily."

"You didn't want to go with them?"

"And miss you! Papino," she faced him with a veil of disappointment clouding her eyes, "I don't believe you are a bit glad to see me. Somehow—

you are different from what I expected to find you. Is something the matter?"

"Nothing in the world—now that you are with me." He threw off preoccupation and smiled happily at her.

"Now—that's better. When you smile I know that everything is well in the world. Are you going to take me to that little restaurant in Posillipo you've so often told me about? Do let's go now. I had coffee at seven o'clock and I'm literally dying of starvation."

Under an awning on the terrace of the restaurant in Posillipo, Jeanne gazed a long time at the outline of Capri, faint in the midday haze.

"To think that I was born there," she said, her voice low and gentle, her eyes reflective. Then she smiled: "That makes it tremendously historical for me."

"And for me," Hogarth responded.

"It makes Circe and the Sirens and Ulysses and Tiberius—all of them—take a back seat; doesn't it, Papino? Do you suppose I'm going to add to its glory in any way?"

"You have already."

"Already!" She had a delightful way of raising her eyebrows an amazing distance.

"By being the most lovely creature ever produced there."

"Ah—parental prejudice! Between you and Mrs. Bryce I ought to be frightfully spoiled. I believe I shall be. Spoiled people only do what they want to."

"What do you do that you don't want to?"

"Now you're anxious again, Papino? I don't want you to be anxious."

"Still—I'd like to know."

"Perhaps—some day—I'll tell you."

"Is it serious?"

"Very."

"Nini!"

"Now you're serious and I'm not. No, really, not a bit. I'm having a wonderful summer. I wonder if you know the reason why! It's because," her eyes suddenly grew serious, "you're giving me the trip. There—I almost told you everything! No—not another word! You aren't going to drag it out of me with questions. I'm positively not going to tell you yet. How long are you going to let me stop with you in Capri?"

"When do you expect to rejoin Mrs. Bryce?"

"She doesn't mind how long I stay. She said I might stop here with you as long as you wanted me."

"Isn't that a bit casual?"

"Casual! Perhaps. As a matter of fact, she will be in Sicily a week, perhaps longer. I hope longer. I want to spend as much time with you in Capri as possible. Do you know, Papino, you've never told me much about your life there. I want to go to every little spot we used to know together—spots you remember—spots I've forgotten. Perhaps when I see them I'll remember too. Do you think I shall? What fun it's going to be! And Papino," she held out her hand and touched his, "will you tell me heaps of things about Mammina—when we are there? I'd like to be closer to her. I seem to have

realized lately what it is not to have a mother—I mean my own, my real mother. I find myself thinking about her lately—all the time. She must have been——" She met Hogarth's eyes and stopped. "Papino—do I make you unhappy talking this way?"

For a few moments he was silent. "I want you to talk to me this way. I think it is what I want most in the world."

They were rather quiet on the boat going to Capri. Hogarth was covertly watching Jeanne all the time. There was a wistful, searching expression in her eyes as they drew near the island that touched him deeply. It was so evident that she was trying to remember.

When they landed and he had given her luggage to the women who would carry it on their heads up the hill to the villa, he found Jeanne gazing up the long road.

"Shall we take the funicula?" he asked.

"I've been along that road before; haven't I?"

"Many times."

"Then—let's go that way."

They walked along at an easy pace. Jeanne's eyes flew to every object, every tree, every pink and blue house, as if to ask questions. They stopped in the Piazza and looked back at Naples. Then they went on through the winding street towards the villa.

Emilia saw them coming and had the gate wide open.

"Pretend to know her," Hogarth whispered. "Her name is Emilia."

"Was she here with you and mother—and me?"

"Yes."

The greeting, on Emilia's part, was effusive. She seized Jeanne's hands and covered them with kisses. A cataract of Italian exclamations filled the air. When they finally got by her and into the house, Jeanne stopped in the long salon and looked about helplessly. Tears were in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Papino—I don't seem to remember anything. It is all new to me."

She wandered from room to room, into the dining room, out on the terrace, all the time seeking vainly for something that would touch the springs of memory. There was something sweetly touching in her efforts to bring back the past.

"No—it's all gone. I thought surely when I was once here, it would come back to me." She was back in the salon examining everything. "But it is all charming. I don't wonder you wanted to keep the house—only——" She stopped before a red chalk portrait that hung on the wall and gazed at it with surprise.

Hogarth, watching her, knew that a crucial moment had come. He already saw a slight bewilderment in her eyes. Her first comment, however, surprised him. It was entirely unexpected.

"How extraordinary, Papino! You never told me you knew Mrs. Bryce!"

"Mrs. Bryce! I don't."

"But—that is a picture of her."

"No, Nini—that is a portrait of your mother."

"My mother! But Papino——" She faced him with utterly bewildered expression.

"A friend of ours did it years ago. Your mother liked it more than any photograph she had."

Jeanne turned back to the portrait. A long silence followed.

"You told me you had no picture of my mother."

Hogarth bowed his head humbly. "I made a promise never to show one to you."

"A promise! To whom?"

"To your step-mother."

"Ah!"

Hogarth looked at her quickly to see what the exclamation meant. Her face told him nothing. She sank down on the divan and with hands clasped in her lap gazed at the portrait with bewilderment that appeared to be increasing.

Hogarth came nearer to her. "What is it, Nini? You seem puzzled. You——"

"There is no mistake? You are sure this is my mother?"

"Why do you ask such a silly question, dear? How could I be mistaken?"

She heard the reproach in his voice and her eyes flew to him. Then she stood up and covered her face with her hands.

"I feel a little strange, Papino. Perhaps I'm tired. Perhaps—— I believe I'll go upstairs to my room."

When Hogarth came down to dinner, he found her again before the portrait. He thought her eyes showed signs of weeping; the look of bewilderment remained. He decided to say nothing for the moment; she would surely tell him what was troubling her. During dinner she appeared *distraite*

and had little to say. When they had gone out on the terrace, she sat down beside him and slipped her hand in his. While Emilia served coffee and returned for the cups they did not speak. Deep silence seemed to have thrown its spell over them both.

"Papino—why did my step-mother make you promise not to show me a picture of my mother?"

"She wanted you to think of her as your mother. She thought you might not remember."

"Why did you make the promise?"

The reproach in her voice cut him deeply.

"She saved your life, Nini."

"How?"

"You were very ill. I was not able to do anything more for you. I was desperately poor. She took you to the best doctors to be found; she provided you with everything. Without her—you might not be alive to-day."

It was too dark for Hogarth to see the expression of pain that shot into Jeanne's eyes as she listened. When he finished speaking she withdrew her hand from his and he heard a faint sigh escape her.

"Then it's true—all that she told me!"

"Has she told you that?"

"Oh, yes—a thousand times. Papino—she hates me."

"Jeanne!"

"Yes, she does. Why shouldn't she? Deep down in my heart, I don't blame her. Everyone knows you love me more than you do her. That's what I meant when I told you it made me so happy to have you give me this trip. It's the first thing

you've ever done for me—all by yourself." Again her hand slipped into his, this time with a tighter clasp. "Papino—did you marry her to save my life?"

Hogarth rose and moved across the terrace. "Nini—don't say a thing like that!"

She followed him and pressed her hand against his arm, insistent.

"I'm no longer a child. I'm a woman now. I want to know. You don't know what it will mean to me. Please say you did it for me. It will make everything so different; it will make me so happy. Otherwise——"

"What?"

"Otherwise—I don't think I shall ever love you again as I have."

Hogarth felt his heart contract. He leaned heavily against the terrace wall. So this was to be the culmination of everything.

"Nini," he stammered. "You don't know what you are saying!"

She slipped her arm about his neck and put her lips close to his ear.

"Say you never loved anyone but my mother. Say it, Papino—say it."

"Good God, Nini—you know that!"

He broke away from her and went into the house. She did not follow him this time. Instead, she sank down on the terrace wall, clasped her hands, lifted them, and smiled up at the radiant stars.

An hour later Hogarth found her still there, apparently in silent communion with the night. He

slipped a sheet of paper into her hand—the words he had written that first night of his return to Capri.

"Read this, Nini. It will tell you everything."

The week slipped by without either of them mentioning the subject that was uppermost in their thoughts and which had reached a crisis that first night. Hogarth dreaded the idea of Jeanne's knowing more than she had evidently already divined; and Jeanne appeared satisfied with what he had told her. They took long walks, they sailed a little, they spent a day at Anacapri; but the moments both of them enjoyed most were when they were together on the terrace after dinner. It was there that Hogarth began outlining his new book to Jeanne; and he found her not only keenly interested but full of helpful suggestions. Her sympathetic, yet critical, attitude recalled vibrantly his similar association with Antonia. In the interest and happiness of these days, he lost all count of time. He wanted to forget for a little while the future. The present was too perfect to permit of any extraneous elements.

At the beginning of the second week, they started off in the cool of morning for a long walk. They left the town behind them and began the long ascent which leads to that end of the island on which still remains the remnants of the palace Tiberius built. The path, rocky and steep, ran between high walls. The world appeared completely shut out. Finally, open country was reached—a ridge of barren land, sterile and gray, with the sea far below on both sides. To the east the bay of Naples unfolded in a smooth, brazen surface of water; to the west

lay the shimmering Mediterranean; directly before them rose the precipitous point with its historical ruins.

"Shall we go up there—all the way?" Hogarth asked, stopping to see if Jeanne were tired.

"Still worried about what that doctor said?" Jeanne commented gaily. "I could easily run up there. The view must be magnificent."

"One of the finest in the world."

"Then do let's hurry."

Half an hour later they reached the pinnacle and, standing on the brink of the precipice, the sea a thousand feet below, they looked across to the Sorrento Peninsula and the distant coast of Paestum. It was an exhilarating view, full of space and color and endless horizons.

Jeanne took off her hat and let the wind blow unrestricted about her. Her hair was lifted from her brow; the light frock clung to her slim body; her head was thrown back eagerly.

"It's wonderful!" she exclaimed. "It's like standing on the edge of the world."

"It was once the edge of the world for many people."

"Who?"

"Slaves and prisoners of Tiberius. He threw them from this spot into the sea."

"What a glorious death—a flight through the air with that marvelous sea at the bottom to receive one!"

Hogarth nodded, reflective. "Much more satisfactory than endless days in noisome prisons."

Jeanne turned back and sank down on the steps

which formed the foundation of a huge cross—a landmark for coasting vessels. The exhilaration of the moment faded and her eyes sought Hogarth's wistfully.

"Did my mother come here often?"

"Yes—and you with her. She loved this place more than any other on the island."

"I think I do, too. It's absolutely away from everything. It's almost in touch with another world. Papino—talk to me about mother. Tell me all the little things you haven't told me yet—inside things—silly things."

At just such moments as these, she had got the intimate story from Hogarth of his first meeting with Antonia, their courtship and marriage, their decision to come to Europe and their daily life in Capri—and at last the incidents connected with Antonia's death.

"That was the only evidence you ever had of her death—that bit of veil—and the wrecked boat!"

Jeanne sat with knees drawn up before her and hands clasped about them; her glance was far off; the tone of her voice suggested that she was speaking to herself.

"Yes—that was all."

She was a long time silent, intently silent.

"You have made her very very real to me—you and Capri. I feel now that I actually know her—that——" Her voice trailed off and was lost in the rush of wind which was gradually increasing in force. She rose and again stood on the edge of the precipice. Some small stones, loosened by her steps,

rolled past her and dashed off into space. She gave a little cry of alarm and found herself caught in Hogarth's arms.

"It's frightfully dangerous!" she exclaimed, with a little tremor of fear and giving one more glance over the precipice.

"It's too dangerous to leave unprotected against careless tourists," Hogarth replied seriously.

"Like me, Papino!"

They passed the post office on their return to the village and found many letters. Awaiting luncheon and immersed in long epistles from school friends, Jeanne did not notice the preoccupation which had taken possession of Hogarth after reading the one letter he had received. She carried her letters to the table and read paragraphs from them between the courses.

"Oh—here's a letter from Mrs. Bryce! To think I never saw it!" She tore the envelope open and ran over the letter hurriedly; then began all over again and read it slowly.

Hogarth watched her with casual interest. His thoughts were far away.

"So very important that it demands a second reading?" he asked.

"It *is* important," Jeanne nodded, without looking up. "One of the girls has had a cable from her mother calling her home. The others are going with her. That will leave Mrs. Bryce alone—with me. Papino——" She looked up and the letter slipped from her hand. "Why, Papino—what is the matter? You look ill?"

He tried to smile away her anxiety. "I'm a little tired; too long a walk perhaps—for such an old man. What were you going to say?"

"I was going to ask you to let me invite Mrs. Bryce here."

"Yes, do—by all means. As a matter of fact," Hogarth's face showed a brighter expression, "it will be a solution for me. I must leave here to-morrow—and I couldn't leave you alone."

"Leave here to-morrow! Why?"

"Your step-mother will be in Paris in three days."

"In Paris! I thought——"

"She writes that she was lonely at home and has come over to join me."

"Here?"

"She speaks of coming here unless I meet her somewhere else."

"What shall you do?"

"Meet her in Paris."

"But—that spoils all your plans."

"It changes them—at least."

Jeanne's frown did not last long; she was too preoccupied now with her own plans.

"Then I'll bring Mrs. Bryce back here with me. It all fits in perfectly. She arrives to-morrow in Naples. I'll go over with you in the morning and fetch her back with me."

CHAPTER XV

THE parting with Jeanne at Naples recalled to Hogarth a similar separation of many years before when he had stood in the same station and bade farewell to her and Antonia. This time it was Jeanne who was left behind waving goodby.

They had made no plans for the immediate future. They had come that morning from Capri and gone to the hotel where Jeanne had found Mrs. Bryce suffering slightly from the fatigue of the journey through Sicily. When she came down from the room where she had been shown, she told Hogarth that she had not yet mentioned the idea of the visit to Capri to Mrs. Bryce, but she said she felt sure that the plan would be carried out.

"You and Mrs. Bryce seem fated not to meet," Jeanne said, as they drove towards the station. "I'm determined you shall, though," she added, with new concentration showing in her eyes. "I'm going to try to keep her with me a long time at Capri. Will you come back and meet her there?"

"If you remain there long—I think I shall come back," Hogarth replied. "I was on the point of giving up the villa and selling everything—before you came. Now—I seem to feel differently. I wonder if you would be willing to spend a year there with me—while I'm writing my new book!"

"A year—just you and I! It would be wonderful! But, Papino, how could you manage it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just you and I!"

He caught her meaning and said nothing.

Now that he was actually rushing forward to meet her, he looked forward to the meeting with his wife with increasing dread. Jeanne and their days together at Capri had pushed the discovery of the letter and the talk with Dr. Catazzo into the background; now, however, with this unexpected, immediate facing of his wife before him, suspicions increased and clamored for consideration. The situation was vastly different from what it had been when they separated in New York. Then, there had been a determined acceptance of the inevitable on Hogarth's part, an acceptance which he struggled to make bearable; now, an abyss yawned between them, a vast, deep pit into which he dared hardly look.

Her letter had come as a sharp, disconcerting shock. He had felt, before leaving her, that his positive insistence upon going alone had forced her into definite acceptance of his will. Though her sullen manner had shown frankly that her acceptance was not voluntary, it had at least shown acceptance. Now, with the arrival of her letter and her announced intention of joining him, he saw it all as a deeply laid scheme to attain her desires at a moment when insistence on his part would be futile. If the letter had reached him before his experience at Capri, it would have affected him differently, he would have received it as the unescapable carrying out of her will and met it with the good grace which many such incidents had taught him. But now her

insistence touched a new chord in him. His original, instinctive dislike of her—crushed down for so many years—flashed through him with impetuous violence. Long years of training in acceptance and the making the best of his fate crumbled as though never having existed. He looked on aghast at this new mood. Was he no longer master of himself! Had constant determination weakened the structure of his resistance! Was he, in this mid-channel of life, to lose all those faculties that had so far saved him! Appreciation, gratitude, a certain forced attitude of kindness—sham affections—were all extinguished in cumulative, vehement excitement. Suspicions became certainties—flaming accusations. He no longer saw any good in her. She appeared now as some inhuman creation of evil—abhorrent, obscene, deadly—poison let loose in the world. She had broken his will; she had killed all his sense of balance; she had robbed him of every vestige of self respect. The mood culminated in violent, devitalizing hate.

The three days trip to Paris became a nightmare. The continuous, repeated motion of the train seemed to cry aloud with the roar of words; they builded one upon the other until a crushing edifice bore down upon him. He got off the train physically unsteady. On his way to the hotel he looked at his watch and felt uncontrollable impatience sweep over him. She had said her boat would arrive that day. This meant waiting until that evening to face her—to hurl at her what he had found out—to crush her with unanswerable evidence.

At the hotel he signed his name and asked to be

shown to the rooms he had reserved by telegraph. The clerk told him a lady by the same name had arrived half an hour earlier.

Ah—so she was there! He would not have to wait! He asked for the number of her suite and hurried to the lift. He was now under the same roof with her—on the same floor—at her door. He knocked loudly. The door was opened to him by her maid who smiled and moved aside to let him pass. He entered without greeting. The room was empty. Then, beyond, through an open door, he saw her sitting at a table eating breakfast.

He stopped, suddenly aware of the violence that had been let loose in him during the past days. He must conquer it. He seemed to realize now for the first time that he had been half mad and capable of almost anything. This would not do. He *must* control himself. Pride swept over him. It was the one moment of his life when he could prove that he was different from her, above her, impregnable to her poison.

She saw him, gave an exclamation of surprise and rose from the table. He shuddered as he realized that the sight of him created a sensation of joy in her. She came on, with outstretched arms, her eyes full of passionate welcome, her lips parted with expressive greeting. His shudder shifted swiftly into trembling. He knew that if she touched him he might do almost anything.

A few feet away from him, she stopped; her greeting ceased; the joy faded from her countenance.

"Why, John—something's the matter!"

He turned away so as not to be so near her.

"What has happened?"

He made a desperate attempt to find some words that would explain quickly. His hand fumbled in his pocket and touched the letter. Ah—that would be the first step! He drew it out and handed it to her without looking at her.

"What is this?"

"Look at it—read it."

He heard the envelope opened, the letter drawn out and unfolded, the sound of slightly rattling paper—then silence. Was she never going to speak? He forced a question.

"You wrote it—didn't you?"

"Of course I did."

"Why?"

He *had* to look at her now. He *must* see her face with its tell-tale guilt. He turned and saw her reading the letter without any enlightening expression. He waited seemingly hours for her to speak.

"Who gave you this?"

"No one. I found it."

"Where?"

"At the villa at Capri—in a book."

She raised her head and looked at him, frowning slightly, but otherwise calm. "I knew I ought not to let you go there."

"*Let* me go!"

"Yes—*let* you go. I knew all the time you'd go pottering around and dig up something. Why aren't you satisfied to leave all that alone? It don't do anything but upset you. Look at yourself now. You're all to pieces—and for what? Cut it out, John. All that's dead and done with."

"It is more living to-day than ever before."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Tell me what you said to my wife that day."

She looked at him in a coolly critical, observant way. Astonishment had given place to curiosity. Even a slight amusement lifted the corners of her mouth. She appeared in no haste to answer his last question; indeed, she gave the impression of not having heard it and of being absorbed in understanding his mood.

He repeated the question in an unsteady voice.

"What did I say to her? How do I know! That was twelve years ago." Her voice now suggested that she had decided to humor him.

"You do remember—you must!"

"Nonsense, John. I couldn't have said anything so important that it must be dragged up years after. What do you want to dig this thing up for now? Why didn't you do it then?"

"I didn't know then."

"Well—you don't know now. You never will."

"Then you admit——"

"I admit nothing."

"That you said something to her that made her go away—made her kill herself."

"Made her kill herself!" She caught up his words and threw them back at him with a loud laugh. "Is that what you are trying to think now? Oh—cut out all this. It's rank foolishness—you know that yourself!"

"I *know* you said something that drove my wife away."

"Your wife! I am your wife."

"You! Never!"

The humoring attitude was upon her again. She smiled slowly, though with cool assurance, with calm contempt. "Then what have I been these past twelve years?"

Hogarth again felt madness rushing upon him. "You killed her!"

"So that's what you're going to say; is it? All right. Prove it."

"I'm going to."

"How?"

"With the help of Dr. Catazzo."

This time her assurance wavered. She started. "So he has been squealing; has he?"

"He told me enough to make it all very plain what you had done."

She tossed her head indifferently, turned to a table, picked up a cigarette and lighted it. Inhaling deeply, she appeared to regain gradually the coolness that had for a few moments left her. She sat down, crossed her legs and glanced out of the window. When she again met Hogarth's flaming eyes, she appeared to have reached a decision.

"Look here, John, all this is pure stuff and nonsense—and rather rotten on your part. You talk like you had picked up some germ down there and it had gone to your head. Nobody's got any business going to Italy in the summer. Any old guide book'll tell you that. I suppose somebody there who's got a grudge against me got hold of you and pumped you full of lies. I must say it's pretty nasty of you to believe them. Sit down. Try to get hold of yourself and listen to me. I'll tell you everything

I know—that is, if you want to hear it. If you don't —let's cut out all this tommyrot—once for all. I'm not feeling the best in the world, anyhow. You've said enough already—and hinted at a lot of other things. If it didn't all have a funny side—I'd be angry."

Her casual acceptance of the situation had a strange effect upon him. Before he knew it, he was sitting down and staring at her as though he had never seen her before. Something new in her face caught his attention and shifted his thoughts. She had said she was not feeling very well; perhaps that made the difference in her expression; her eyes were less brilliant, and there were circles, tiny swollen puffs, beneath them. Under the influence of changing thoughts, excitement died within him and left him dully receptive. He felt vaguely that he was once more drifting into the mood in which she had found him long ago and forced him into acceptance of her. Was it going to be that way again? Was he always to be dominated by her, a mere automaton in her powerful hands? And, as many times before, he felt himself caught under the influence of her dominating personality, he found himself watching her and looking on as if he were not really present, as if he were a spectator with no personal part in what was taking place. He thought it must be very much that way with a moth when it circled about destroying flame; the greater force killed all inimical initiative.

With head thrown back, inhaling deeply, blowing smoke vehemently through her nostrils, she looked like some vital force—self sufficient and complete.

"Do you think you are ready to hear what I have to say?"

Hogarth nodded.

"Well—I *did* see your wife—as you call her. I had a long, frank, honest talk with her. We went straight to the heart of the matter—the sort of thing you hate to do. . . . I told her lots of things—principally that she had had her chance with you and failed. I told her she was keeping you down—both you and your child. I told her I was willing and anxious—and determined—to save you from the sort of grubby life you were leading. . . . I told her that if she loved you and the child she'd see it as I did—as any sensible, honest person was bound to see it. I told her that I'd see that she was well taken care of if she'd get out of the way, get a divorce and leave you free. . . . When I got through telling her this, she acted pretty strange. I don't think she was well to start with—and after being faced with some real facts—well, it may have all sort have gone to her head. When she got up to go she looked queer. I saw there was no use talking any more to her—so I let her go—and told her I'd come to her house that afternoon and plan things with her. When I went to the house—she was gone. . . . That's all there was to it. Do you think that's enough to make you say I killed her?. . . Any woman that loved a man and her child as she pretended to do would have gone away just as she did. It showed she had more sense than I thought she had. It even showed she loved you." She settled back in the chair and lighted another cigar-

ette. "I'll even go so far as to say I believe she loved you as much as I do."

Hogarth heard his voice—could it really be his?—coming as though from a long distance. "Would you have acted that way?"

Then he heard laughter, harsh, loud laughter.

"Good Lord—of course not! I'm not that sort of a woman. I'm not a fool. I've got a hard, cool head. To begin with, I'd never have let you get so far down on your luck. There's always some way to keep your head above water. I'd have found it for you—if you hadn't been able to yourself. . . . I'd like to see some woman trying to get you away from me!" Again the jarring laughter. "You know—it's funny, John, that a man like you has had two women crazy about him! You aren't a bit the type I thought I'd ever fall in love with. As a matter of fact, you are just about everything I'm inclined to hate in men."

"Why don't you hate me?"

She lifted her shoulders indifferently. "Because—well—because you love what you hate. Funny combination—isn't it? But it happens once in a while."

He listened, physically dulled, mentally groping. He welcomed the calm her presence had brought him; he saw it as a great aid towards self control. He listened intently; he missed neither a word nor an inflection; and all the time he found himself marveling at her point of view. How was it ever possible to reach a nature like this—a nature so absolutely incapable of understanding sentiments which actuated other human beings.

"Would nothing I might do make you hate me?"

he asked, helplessly enmeshed in a tangle of incomprehension.

"You know, honestly, I don't believe so. I don't care for you for what you are. It's just because you are yourself. I've never felt this way with anybody else. I don't expect to feel this way with anybody again. It's funny—I admit that myself—but with you I'm perfectly happy; without you—I'm miserable and discontented."

"Suppose I left you?"

"You won't ever do that, John."

"You think not?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Why?"

"You're too dependent on me. You couldn't get along without me—without all the things I give you. You've formed habits since you've been living with me that mean a lot more to you than you're willing to admit. You love the soft side of life just as much as I do. It's a real joy to you to have fine clothes, big houses, lots of servants, and——" she laughed—"silk pyjamas—and all the luxuries this old world gives us when we have the money to pay for them. Besides, John, you're not a fighter. You're about as incapable of facing life as anybody I ever saw. No—you'll never leave me."

"I'm making some money now, you know."

"A few petty thousand dollars! You'll run through that in a month or two. I don't believe you have any idea how much money we spend a month. You just try it on your own and see how far you go. Why, John, I'm so sure of you now that I'd be almost willing to let you try it alone—just to

prove to you that I'm right. I know, just as well as I know I'm sitting here looking out on the Place Vendôme, that you'd be back in a couple of months —a lot more friendly than you were when you came in here this morning. You know, I'm inclined to let you try it. It wouldn't be risking anything. It might do you lots of good. You'd find out what luck you were in and, incidentally, you'd find out I'm not half as bad as you'd sometimes like to think me. There's only one thing that keeps me from doing it."

"What?"

Her eyes were in his, once more filled with that frank, primitive, animal passion. Before replying, she laughed a little uncertainly, very femininely, entirely the concupiscent female.

"I'd miss you so infernally much."

Hogarth rose and went to the window and looked down into the crowded square. The congestion of midday life was at its height; the crisis of the rush of a great city was just there beneath him; people, motors, thousands of vehicles and rushing humanity were flowing by in an endless stream. And yet, there he stood, aloof and seeing only a future that a few words had just brought into being. Escape had been made easier than he had ever imagined possible. Everything was to be very simple now. He was going to force her own suggestion upon her. He was going to make her live up to her own beliefs —such as they were. Suspicions, uncertainties, horrors were to be pushed aside and forgotten—never thought of again. The only real thing now was that peaceful, quiet, sane, clean life that lay before him.

Jeanne and his work—his writing! Enough for any man! More, far more, than he deserved!

He turned back. As he looked at the woman that had made this future possible, he smiled with immense relief. He had come into the room a madman; a few minutes more and he would leave it sane and contented.

"Very well, Mary. Then—I think I'll try it."

"Try what?"

"What you suggested—getting along without you."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what you said. I have some money—a little, you call it—but there is more in prospect. I'm going to see if I can't make it go a long way."

Her smile was just the least bit forced.

"Where are you going?"

"Back to Capri, I think. Jeanne will probably live there with me. I already have a book planned. It will take me a year to write it."

"A year!"

"Do you think that a long time to write a novel? Dickens——"

"I don't give a hang about the novel. I'm thinking of your being away that long."

"You think I can't stick it out?" He was struggling with all his force to keep the conversation light; and all the time he knew it was approaching crisis.

"Look here, John—are you trying to be funny?"

"No. I'm quite serious."

She rose and came up to him and put her hands on his shoulders.

"Foolish boy! Do you think I'll let you do it?"

He took her hands in his, lifted them from his shoulders and released them.

"How can you stop me?"

They were now looking closely, intently into each other's eyes.

"You want to go?"

"Yes."

"You don't mind leaving me for a whole year?"

"No."

"Does that mean that you don't love me any more?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"I have never loved you."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Then you've just been using me—getting all you could out of me until you made enough to throw me over?"

"Put crudely—it has been exactly that."

"And now—you want to leave me for good?"

"Yes."

The cold, controlled anger which he sensed in her abrupt questions and shining eyes, suddenly shifted. Her voice began to show a slight bewilderment.

"I thought—I was sure I had made you love me."

"That was impossible. I told you that at the beginning."

"You made me think you loved me."

A wave of utter weariness swept over Hogarth. The endless interview must be finished somehow. Impatience urged him to choke out the little remaining vestiges of decency left him and meet her

on her own ground. It was the only possible way to reach her. In a last desperate attempt he cast all the inhibitions of his life to the winds.

"I made you think I loved you because that was a part of my job. You paid me to do it. I'm glad I earned the money so well. You said money would buy everything. You've proved it. If you thought I loved you—that meant as much to you as though I had."

The shaft struck home. Her bewilderment increased. She stared at him now as though not understanding a word.

"You don't love me at all?" She spoke slowly, each word evidently considered and weighed.

His steady gaze repelled her and drew her. She tried to probe another meaning from it and failed. Then, abruptly, her strength appeared to come back.

"You're lying. You couldn't have lived with me twelve years as my husband and hated me."

"You forget money is a great spur to one—especially when it is needed for one's child."

"Ah—you did it for her?"

"No one should know that better than you."

"Not the least bit for me?"

"No."

This time it was she who went to the window and looked out. Her silhouette was somehow more resolute than her face as Hogarth had last seen it.

Her voice, when it reached him again, sounded unnaturally low.

"What can I do, John?"

"Absolutely nothing."

He saw her whole figure move as if with sudden convulsion; then she was back upon him with unchained passion.

"You talk as if I was something awful. After all—what have I done that any other woman would not have done?"

He held out his hand to stop her and as she thrust it aside and tried to throw herself in his arms—a gesture that conflicted strangely with her rage—Hogarth knew that the mad mood of the train had hold of him once more. He made a last vain effort at control; but nothing availed now. Pent up repression gushed forth to meet her attack. He grasped her arms and held her rigidly before him.

"You have done everything that God and Nature have forbidden us to do. You are a poison let loose on the world. I used to think you didn't know the evil you were capable of. Just for that reason I have often tried to excuse you. But it isn't true; you do know; you act deliberately; you are diabolically clever. Your instruments are evil and you work with them on the evil in others. You succeed because you have no human feelings. You buy people—their self respect, their honor, their lives. Oh, I admit we are weaklings in your hands. I am just like all the others—no better, no worse. Only now—I see everything clearly. You buy your servants—your companions—your lover—everyone who comes near you. That wretched creature at Capri is an example. You paid him to carry out your criminal intentions towards my child. God saved her—but He didn't save that man. Everything he prized most has been lost—only money is left him

now—the money you paid him to trick me into your power. You paid your servants so they would not send the letters I had written to my wife. You tried to buy me into divorcing her. Then you tried to buy her—and when you found that impossible, you drove her to her death. Then again, you tried to buy me—and succeeded—at the price of my child's life. Now—do you understand me at last? Have you a faint idea of what I feel for you?"

He thrust her arms from him and turned towards the door.

"Stop!"

He threw the door open and stood on the threshold with his back to her.

"There is nothing more for us to say."

"You think you are going to leave me this way? You think I am going to give you up?"

"You've got to. Your power is broken. I am free from your power forever. There is nothing more you can do—unless——"

"What?"

Hogarth swung back and faced her; and for the first time in her life she cowered.

"You have committed murder yourself—and you have planted the desire for it in me. If you follow me——" He stopped abruptly. The change in her expression at his last words silenced him. It was exactly the gloating look that comes into the eyes of wild animals when they find their prey worthy of the chase. Then—Good God!—her words!

"You *will* come back, John. You've got to. I'm going to have a child—your child and mine!"

CHAPTER XVI

HOGARTH remained barely a moment staring at his wife; then, turning quickly, he rushed along the corridor and down to the street. He did not stop until he was out on the sidewalk and in the midst of a throng of people. The fresh air, the sunshine, the jostling of human beings all about him brought a strangely delightful sensation of reality. The room he had just left, the woman and, most of all, her words—all had been unreal, a horrible dream, a nightmare. Surely he had imagined everything! Nothing so terrific as the scene he had just passed through could be real. It was only the culmination of excitement which had created weird fancies. Otherwise—if it had actually taken place—how could these people about him be so carelessly gay and happy! Some of them were actually laughing! No —he had dreamed the past hour.

He breathed deeply the fresh, stimulating air and started off without any determined direction. The Place de la Concorde welcomed him with its wide, brilliant spaces. He cut across it and came to the Pont Neuf. The river was shimmering silver, rippling with the gay, carnival spirit of midsummer. He stopped, half way across the bridge, and looked down. From a distance the water had appeared still and silent; directly above it, its swiftness, its turbulence became tremendously real. Its momentum caught his fancy. It was so relentlessly deter-

mined to pursue its way. Nothing really mattered; nothing interfered; nothing could possibly stop it.

His thoughts flashed back to the woman he had fled from. The rushing river became a symbol of her. Nothing mattered to her; nothing interfered with her desires; nothing was strong enough to combat the evil in her.

"Ah—then it *was* real—what he had gone through—what he had heard! Her words came back with terrific force. He leaned on the balustrade, his hands clutched at the stone coping, he shuddered. Accursed words—shrieked at her by a horde of furies! He tried not to hear them. As well try not to feel the beat of one's heart!

"Your child—and mine!"

How he had rejoiced in the power which had denied her children! It had been more than rejoicing—it had been actual exaltation. It was the one thing untold gold had not brought her; unless —now. He shook his head violently. He would not believe it. It could not be true. It was another lie—spoken this time to hold him; a last desperate attempt, when everything else had failed, to bring him back to her. He threw back his head and laughed. What a puerile trick—really not worthy of her drastic methods!

He began walking again. He came to the grateful green of the Luxembourg Gardens. Noonday peace was there. Children were playing near the fountain; nurses knitted and dozed; a guard was graciously on watch. Children! Nature would surely not give such a woman children! What would her child be like—a monster—hideous—deformed—

accursed! No—no! As long as there was a God in heaven such a creature would not be allowed to propagate. She *must* end with herself.

A child, rolling a hoop, ran against him. He steadied the little creature, stopped and started the hoop rolling and watched the child run after it. The air was filled with young, happy laughter. If she should have a child—his child! Good God—that must not be!

He sat down and tried to think calmly. If it were true, if she were going to have a child, something must be done quickly. What?

Up to that day—or at least up to the time that he had gone, a few weeks ago, to Capri—he had had what he termed to himself, honorable, decent, civilized ideals. His intentions and his attitude towards life had been kept on a fairly high level. It was one of his most deeply founded beliefs that one must live honestly, in thought and in action; one must see squarely the good in others, admit it, praise it; one must give what one expected to receive; one must—to put it simply—pay the fiddler. He knew that he had tried to do this. He had realized very clearly, when he went into this marriage, what was expected of him; and he had given that to the fullest and best that was in him. He had done much for the woman; he had driven in, by constant repetition, such standards which at least the superficial world demanded. He had hoped that their outward acceptance would carry some deeper influence; but all such hopes had soon been dashed to pieces. As well try to polish a mountain of stone as to attempt making any impression upon her character. He

had done his best—but he had failed. But now—her words—her last declaration! No—even the power that directed his life would not ask that much of him; it was demanding the impossible! The horror of producing with her a being that would live, multiplying throughout eternity her evil, overwhelmed him with a rush of terror. Standards of morality, principles, his own personal religious beliefs—all went down before the hideousness of such a thought. At last, through the association of twelve years, through the slow insidious poison of her influence, he had become contaminated; he had sunk to her level; he too had grown into a primitive being that responded only to the demands of the primigenial. He realized with a weirdly calm acceptance that civilized inhibitions no longer existed for him; the entire mechanism of which he was made had suddenly shifted in purpose and now functioned for one sole object. She must not be permitted to curse the world with a child of her own flesh and blood!

He got up and walked on. Once more the crowds in the streets thronged about him. He walked rapidly but without direction for a long time; then, unconsciously tired, his steps lagged. A man, standing beside a sight-seeing automobile, hurled words at him through a megaphone. He listened in spite of himself—he could not escape the man's voice; then, still unaware really of what he was doing, he bought a ticket and climbed into the car. The people on the seat with him were speaking English. He began to listen. They were talking about the places they were going to see. How strangely interested

they appeared to be! The car started and lumbered along; then stopped. The passengers descended and filed into a church. Hogarth followed them. The slim, fragile, dainty edifice struck him with a keen sensation of joy. Where had he seen it before! And this large, dim cathedral, with its cool shadows and lofty arches! And the little one story building near the river! Why were they going in there? And those strange, slimy, glistening white bodies lying on marble slabs! Had they really once been human beings, full of life, full of desires, full of—murder!

Another hour and sights began to be blurred to Hogarth. He wondered how long this great, lumbering car would continue reeling around corners and dashing along wide boulevards. Suddenly he sprang up from his seat and jumped to the ground. A shop window had caught his attention and called to him. He fell as he reached the ground, but was up at once and running back to the shop window. He stopped before it and peered in, fascinated. A collection of glistening objects brought a contented smile to his lips. They were exactly what he had been looking for—and yet—how long it had taken him to find them!

He went into the shop, asked to be shown the pistols, examined them curiously, demanded complete information as to their use. He had not had one in his hands for years; he was quite ignorant of their mechanism. He finally decided upon one that was less glistening than the others—it had a dull, sinister gleam that fascinated him—had it loaded, paid for it, slipped it into his pocket and went out.

Night had come on. The street lamps were lighted. He stopped, amazed, and looked at his watch. Half past seven! Was it possible! Had he been wandering about for eight hours! He knew now that he was very tired; he was more than that —he was weak and famished. A restaurant across the street appeared pleasantly inviting. He entered it, sat down and ordered the table d'hôte dinner.

How fantastic that he had thought it impossible for him to sink to her level! Everyone who had come under her influence had. Why should he, more intimately associated with her than anyone else, escape? A picture of the utterly ruined, utterly broken doctor at Capri rose before him. He was a perfect illustration of what she could do. She had caught him in her net, showered him with gold, and left him a helpless wreck—without wife, without children, without hope. He began to think of other cases. But why think of others! His own case was the important one now. No—not his—hers! He must begin to plan a little. And yet—even before that, he must be sure that there was no mistake. If she had lied to him, he would do nothing. She could bring her own end upon herself. If she had spoken the truth—Ah! But he must know. He must somehow force the truth from her.

He hailed a passing cab and gave the name of the hotel. The *concierge* met him, smiling and unctious.

"Madame has just gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"To Naples. She left a note for Monsieur—in case he returned after she had gone."

Hogarth tore open the envelope. There were only

a few lines scribbled on a visiting card. "I have gone to Capri. You will find me there."

"When does the train leave?"

The *concierge* looked at his watch and gave a sympathetic shrug. "It has already gone, Monsieur; ten minutes ago."

"And the next one?"

"For Naples? In the morning at eight." Then, as if in answer to Hogarth's bewildered expression: "Madame received a telegram which, I think, hastened her departure. The telegram was directed to Monsieur."

"To me! Where is it?"

"It was sent to Monsieur's room. Perhaps it is still there."

Hogarth rushed to the lift. How slow it went! Why didn't they put in American elevators in these hotels. At last the room—but no telegram. Then, in her room, in bits upon the floor, he found it. It took desperately long minutes to piece the bits together. Ah—now!

"Come back to Capri at once. Let nothing detain you. Most important. Well. Love. Jeanne."

Let nothing detain you! Most important! Well! Hogarth stared at the words, gathered the bits of paper in his hand and hurried down to the concierge.

"You think this decided my—my wife to leave here?"

"Immediately after receiving the telegram Madame ordered me to arrange reservations for her."

"When did the telegram arrive?"

"About half past four, Monsieur."

"Is there no way for me to arrive in Naples before——" Hogarth hesitated.

"Before Madame? I fear not." The concierge turned and consulted a railway guide. "There is a chance of Monsieur's arriving six hours later than Madame—if he is willing to take the midnight train. But, of course, there is no wagon lit."

"I am willing—I must take anything."

Again on the train with the rushing wheels grinding out words! But how different they were now! Let nothing detain you! Most important! Dawn brought a vision of smiling, green France; then came Switzerland and mountains, cool, snow mountains; at last, Milan, Genoa, Pisa. Let nothing detain you! Most important! Rome—six hours more. What could have happened? How reassuring, how thoughtful, that one little word—well! Otherwise—the journey would have been hell. Still—what could have happened? Perhaps Jeanne had seen Dr. Catazzo! No—he was not there. Could he have returned? Then what? Conjectures led nowhere.

Naples. Five o'clock. Two hours too late for the Capri boat. She had made that easily. But there was a way still, if not to overtake her, at least to arrive a very little later. He drove to the dock and engaged a launch. Preparations appeared endless. He got through some minutes by sending Jeanne a telegram advising her of his arrival. Then he was on the way. An hour later he could just see the steamer crossing the last stretch between Sorrento and Capri.

The shimmering sea appeared like a shimmering

stretch of eternity. He did not see its softly changing lights, its radiant contours, its dazzling beauty; he saw only an endless stretch of water that separated him from—what?

The agony of suspense blotted out all memory of that mad day in Paris. His thoughts leapt forward now. He was aware only of the desperate need of reaching Jeanne before his wife. Her sudden departure appeared to him full of evil import. In her present condition she was capable of anything. What had gone before would now be as nothing.

At the bow of the launch, alone, his eyes straining forward, he suddenly clasped his hands and, for the first time in many years, his lips moved in prayer.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Jeanne left Hogarth at the station at Naples, she hurried back to the hotel with rapidly beating heart. Everything was going just as she had hoped. Determination and excitement burned brightly in her eyes.

"I'm so glad you feel better!" she exclaimed, when she found Mrs. Bryce up and dressed.

"I'm quite all right, dear. It was only rest I needed." Then, with a faint suggestion of anxiety: "Has your father gone?"

Jeanne nodded; then demurred. The subject uppermost in her thoughts was too important to be put off. "Are you well enough to begin another trip—not a very long one—only three hours?"

"Another trip! Heavens!"

"On a nice little tub of a boat that goes this way and that—when the wind blows."

Mrs. Bryce's eyes were full of questions.

"You see," Jeanne went on with a rush, "Father has left me in your hands. As you hadn't any special plans for the moment—at least I told him so—he suggested—I suppose too the origin of the suggestion, I might as well admit it, came from me—that we go back to Capri and wait there until he wires me what his definite plans are." She did not miss the alarm her words created and her heart beat as if it would burst; but she went on as though her suggestion was the most casual thing in the world.

"I assured father you would stop with me. So, you see, there's no way out of it. You've just got to."

"My dear Jeanne! You are asking something of me that is quite impossible!"

"Impossible! Why? It seems perfectly simple to me. The villa is already for us; and Emilia——"

"Emilia!"

"She's the servant father had when he lived there years ago. She's a dear—a sort of cook and housekeeper—the only real *bonne a tout faire* I've ever known. You'll adore her." Jeanne looked at her watch, more to control herself than to know the time. "The boat leaves at three o'clock. Suppose we have luncheon now. That will give us plenty of time to reach the quai. I told Emilia to expect us this evening."

Mrs. Bryce, with an expression that to Jeanne was painfully strained, stared down at her clasped hands. Neither of them spoke through a short pause.

Jeanne continued: "You've never been to Capri; have you?"

The answer came after hesitation and with obvious effort. "No."

"Don't you want to see it? It is very beautiful. Father calls it dramatic. I know you will adore it."

Another long pause.

"There's nothing to interfere with your going, is there?"

"I suppose—not."

Jeanne sprang up impetuously. "Then—let's hurry and have luncheon and get off."

"No—no—wait—let me think." Jeanne felt her

hand clasped in a detaining one. "I think—I'd better not go."

"You don't want to?"

"I do—and I don't."

Jeanne drew away and hurried to the door. "It's all settled. I'm going to order luncheon sent up here. I'll do all your packing as soon as I come back. Please rest and leave everything to me."

All through luncheon and on the way to the quai, she kept up a running fire of chatter that successfully covered increasing excitement and left Mrs. Bryce no opportunity to offer further objections. Once or twice, when Jeanne felt she was on the verge of changing her mind, she rushed precipitately into a long description of something entirely irrelevant; and when at last they were on the boat, the ropes hauled in and the steamer actually on the way, she sank down on a bench across the deck from Mrs. Bryce and gave a sigh of supreme happiness. It was all too wonderful, too extraordinarily marvelous! But she must keep up a little longer, smother her impatience, calmly await the crisis that was sure to come in the next few hours.

From time to time she glanced across the deck to the slender, fragile woman who sat there so quietly intent. The heavy veil had been pushed up from her face and her pale, thoughtful, so infinitely gentle countenance was turned in the direction of their destination. Jeanne thought it the loveliest face she had ever seen. She had thought it beautiful the first time she had seen it. The deep gray eyes, the delicate, very human features, the soft, perfectly white hair—everything appealed to her in an unusual way.

She found her so unobtrusively—and yet so unmistakably—a lady. Her daintiness, the refinement of everything about her, her tastes, her exquisite voice, had fired the imagination of the young girl and created an idol which she worshiped. Their meeting had come at a time in Jeanne's life when she was seeking for someone to imitate—an experience that comes to most boys and girls—and to find someone who expressed so perfectly what she had always yearned to be herself, had had a tremendous effect upon her. Intimacy could hardly have failed to be the result of such adoration; and it had not come gradually; it had sprung into life at the first contact.

Not until the little steamer had dropped anchor at Capri and the swarm of row boats had come out to take passengers ashore, did Jeanne approach Mrs. Bryce.

"I wanted you to drink it all in, undisturbed," she said, as though in explanation of her long absence. "Don't you find it beautiful? Somehow—it's so beautiful that it hurts. Aren't you glad you came?"

Mrs. Bryce caught her breath quickly. "It hurts me too." Then quietly, almost reflectively: "It is one of the magic spots of the world."

"We'll take the funicula up to the town. Father and I walked up the road, but it's rather a long pull."

"I'm not tired. You are very thoughtful, Jeanne."

"You promised to call me Nini."

"Well—Nini—darling."

Jeanne looked away quickly. Tears were all too

near to gushing forth. "Where are all your bags? Oh, yes, I see them now. Let's get in the next boat."

They landed, took the funicula and came out on the Piazza. Mrs. Bryce had lowered her veil as they left the boat and now stood beside Jeanne, almost timidly awaiting her to lead the way.

"Father says Capri has changed very much since he was here. Very few of the old colony—even the shopkeepers have retired and given their business into the hands of their children. This is the restaurant where he used to come in the afternoons for a glass of vermouth and to hear the gossip of the town. See the jolly old fat fellow there! His name is Morgano. He says he remembers me perfectly. I don't believe him; do you? And this old man coming towards us—the one with the gray beard—he has been a model for years for all the painters who come here. You will find a water color of him in every shop. And such water colors! Did you ever see anything so frightful! They say tourists buy them by the hundred! This is the Hotel Quisisana which translated means 'Here one finds health.' Sounds like a sanatorium; doesn't it? Now—we turn to the right. Aren't these the most adorable, funny, uncomfortable paths you ever saw! No wonder the natives wear rope sandals! Shall we buy some ourselves to-morrow—and become real Caprese?"

On and on she rattled; and all the time they were approaching nearer and nearer to the villa. At the next turn they would see the wooden gate. Jeanne slipped her arm through Mrs. Bryce and held on to her firmly.

"There's Emilia at the gate—waiting for us. Father says she has grown into a prosperous matron. Don't be surprised if she kisses your hand. Rather a nice custom; isn't it? Imagine a servant at home kissing one's hand. It's quite the other way round. . . . Yes, here we are, Emilia. This is Mrs. Bryce, who has come to stop with us. Is dinner ready? We are both starving. . . . This is the salon where father and mother—my real mother, you know—used to spend their evenings. Father wrote *the* book here. You see—Emilia remembers to fill all the vases with marigolds. My mother loved them just as you do. . . . This is her portrait—the first picture I ever saw of her—the only one. . . . But you can't see it through that heavy veil. Please let me lift it. . . . There! . . . Now! . . . Ah!"

Suddenly Jeanne felt that she had reached the end of her strength. All her vague doubts ebbed away and left her trembling before certainty. She turned slowly, overcome with indecisions, then rushed towards the stairs and up to her room and threw herself across the bed. The portrait and the living face had put all end to agonizing doubts.

It seemed to her hours later when she felt a cool hand laid on hers.

"Jeanne."

She opened her tear dimmed eyes and saw an utterly weary, very grave face near her own.

"What is it, dearest? Why are you sobbing so?"

"Because—I know."

"What, dear, do you know?"

She pushed back her hair and raising her arms, clasped them about the trembling figure.

"You are trying to keep it from me. Why don't you tell me? Why don't you want me to know?"

"Jeanne!"

"I don't understand at all! It is all beyond me!"

"What is it you don't understand?"

"Why you don't want me to know you are my mother."

"Jeanne!"

"You are—you are! I know it. I've known it ever since I saw your portrait. I knew it before that. I think now I've known it ever since I first saw you. It was not natural for me to love you so."

She felt the gentle clasp relax; she was left alone; darkness was about her.

Dusk had floated softly into the room through the open windows until now there were only looming shadows. Nothing was any longer distinct.

Jeanne stared about, frightened by the darkness and the intense silence.

"Where are you?" she cried.

"I am here," came the quiet answer.

Jeanne made out a dim outline against the open window. She waited, frightened now more than ever by the sound of the voice that reached her. It had a tone in it that she had not heard before. It was so firm and calm and almost hard. She clasped her hands against her breast. Had she committed some grave offense? Everything was so far beyond her comprehension! She understood nothing. She was as totally in the dark as this silent room about her. Had she done wrong? No—no—no! No matter what this might mean to the silent figure there at the window—or to her father—she had the right

to think of herself. Her own happiness was at stake now.

Ah—the voice again—the steady, calm, cold voice without any life in it!

"Jeanne—your mother is dead."

In an access of fear, Jeanne remained perfectly still. There must be some reason for this insistence. She sought explanation. In a sudden flash of intuition a hope flickered before her. She ran to her dressing table, unlocked a drawer, drew out a sheet of paper, crossed to the window and pressed it into the hands of the still figure there.

"Read this. My father wrote it when he returned here a few weeks ago." She felt her way back to the dressing table and lighted a candle. "Sit here. Can you see? Now."

She again threw herself across the bed. This time she lay with her chin propped in her hand, her eyes gazing steadily at the face in the candle light. She watched intently, breathlessly. She did not miss a single expression that flitted across the pale face—and there were many. At first there were only vague, uncertain questions; then came a faint smile—not of pleasure or mirth of any kind—just a gentle curving of the lips that suggested far off, fleeting happiness; then came a look of deep sorrow, a despairing expression that made all the lines of the face sag; then, flickering hope and, suddenly, an almost voiced joy flashed out.

The paper fell, unheeded, to the floor.

Jeanne crept noiselessly across the room and knelt down and rested her head in the empty lap.

"Now—are you willing that I should know?"

There was a convulsive movement, a cry, a crushing embrace.

"Nini!"

Emilia tapped timidly on the open door and announced dinner. Jeanne sprang up and was quickly drawn back by Antonia who whispered that they must be cautious; Emilia would surely recognize her; they must plan a little before taking any risks. Their conference ended with Jeanne explaining to Emilia that Mrs. Bryce was her mother's sister; and when they went down to dinner what might otherwise have been an emotional scene was got through quietly. Emilia's eyes were filled with wonder and amazement; but the subterfuge had been accepted unquestioningly.

Jeanne and Antonia ate little; they said hardly a word; and when they were again upstairs, with the candle extinguished and only the radiance of the Italian night above them, Jeanne heard the story of the past twelve years of Antonia's life.

Antonia recalled little of that last day in Capri. She remembered going to the Tragara to keep an appointment with—someone. Dr. Catazzo had told her to go home, that she was ill, that she had high fever; but she had not taken his advice. She had kept the appointment.

But the appointment! With whom?

The woman her father had married.

Ah! What had they talked about?

Antonia's eyes grew strangely dark. "That, Jeanne, has been forgotten. I have put that out of my mind. Don't let us bring it back now. I only

remember running away from something that had become too hideous for me to bear. I only remember a wild, irresistible desire to get away from everything. That was all."

After that—darkness—eternal, oppressive darkness! Then, very slowly, almost imperceptibly, a return of consciousness; she opened her eyes and saw a little room, four bare stone walls and one window through which came a soothing sound like the murmur of tiny waves lapping a beach. A woman with a stolid yet kind face was sitting beside the bed. No words passed between them; she was too weak to ask questions or listen to replies. She had no thoughts; she was only aware of stirring, vague consciousness. She must have lain that way for weeks and weeks. Gradually the power of thought came back to her; little by little she began to remember; then came an avalanche of questions. It was difficult to find out exactly what had happened to her. The woman's husband, a fisherman, had found her the day after a terrific tempest, in a sinking boat; he had brought her ashore with him; these two good souls had tended her through months and months—without medical aid or advice. The hut they lived in was many miles from any village, on the Calabrian coast. She had lived there through her long period of forgetfulness and the longer convalescence, for more than a year, with only the two simple, ignorant, superstitious peasants for companions. They had done all they could for her; they had saved her life and waited for her mind and her memory to come back to her. It was a tremendous strain for her to piece together what had made up her past life. She had to do

it slowly—piece by piece. Then came the ordeal of planning—of trying to take up again where everything had seemed to have ceased. Endless days, slowly returning strength and the waiting for an opportunity to get away from that remote part of the world and—more than anything else—forcing a desire to go back into the world. Long illness had dulled her to the need of initiative. Even her husband and her child seemed to belong to some other existence.

When she finally reached Naples, something within her began to stir; and with the terrific agony of full awakening a primitive love of life swept over her again. She was once more thoroughly alive. Her first steps carried her to the Consulate. She asked for her husband's friend and was told that he had gone away the previous year. No one knew her there; she knew no one. She asked if anyone knew her husband and was told by an indifferent, bored clerk that a man named Hogarth *had* lived in Capri, but that he had married an American, and had returned, it was thought, to America.

After that, she dared not go to Capri. She had, however, written, under an assumed name to a friend they had known there and asked him for any news he might have of a man named Hogarth. He had answered her questions too fully. He wrote her that Hogarth, a year after his wife's death, who had been drowned, had married an American, a Mrs. Watson, and had gone away, taking his child with him. He had heard of neither of them since.

The day that letter came, with its bald statement of facts, became for her the dividing line between

life and death. Before that she had lived; now she was, as the world believed, actually dead.

Still, she must go on existing, she had too much courage to become a coward and end everything; but nothing any longer seemed real or worthwhile. She became a mere automaton; she ate and slept and worked, that was all.

Her first position was as a governess in a Neapolitan family who wished their children to learn English. A year later she changed to an English family who were trying to save the life of their delicate child. Her travels began. For eight years she had lived with this family, always moving from one place to another, always searching for the health that never came to the child. The end came; the child died; and she found herself facing a momentous decision. She had saved enough to return to America. The idea had been in her thoughts for some time. Why? Because—because she knew that her child was soon to go there.

"You knew about me all this time!"

"Since that first year at Naples I have seen you almost every year."

Seen me?"

"And talked to you—even played with you."

Jeanne clasped her hands with growing excitement. "Please tell me everything—every little thing."

"Do you remember?—but of course you can't. It was so long ago and so unimportant to you. It was at Nice. You were living in a villa at Cimiez—a villa of white marble, with beautiful gardens and a wonderful view of the sea."

Jeanne nodded. "I remember. There were two horrible stone lions on either side of the driveway. My step-mother brought them with her from Florence."

Antonia smiled. "You see—you remember what I have forgotten. One day I passed there with the little ill child I had in my care. We stopped to peer through the fence at your garden. You saw us and ran out and asked us to come in and play with you. We did. You were nine years old then; I hadn't seen you for more than three years; during that time I had been desperately ill; I had forgotten everything—and yet, Jeanne, I knew you at once. But how you had changed! I had left you a delicate little girl; I found you strong and well. When I had enough courage I asked you your name. It was almost more than I could bear. . . . I brought my little charge there almost every day for two months. In some ways it was greater happiness than I had ever expected to experience again—and it was the deepest suffering."

Jeanne's eyes were dim. "I remember the child. I don't remember you."

"I know, dearest. I kept as far away from you as possible. I was not sure of myself. I still had to build an edifice of self control. But seeing you helped me—and seeing you so well, so beautiful, so surrounded with everything I had always wished for you almost made me contented."

"And the next time?"

"Was at Nice the next year. Then, in succeeding years, at the places you visited. I had some influence with the family with whom I lived. It was easy to

follow you, for I had made a friend of your governess. We wrote to each other constantly. I was never without news of you. When she wrote me that your father was considering taking you to America to place you at school there I began to plan to follow you. Then—the idea began to develop to try and obtain a place in the same school with you. Well—I did. You know the rest."

Without, the radiant night, which they had watched, and which had watched with them, began to fade. The sky grew colorless, faded, dead. A breeze stirred gently and made its way into the room.

Antonia rose and went to the window. A faint rose line appeared along the distant coast line of Paestum. She trembled, choked back a sob and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Nini—we must forget the past night."

"Never!"

"But—your father!"

"When he knows——"

"He must never know."

"I shall telegraph him to-day."

"No, Nini, he must never know. There is someone else to think of."

"Who?"

"His wife."

"She has no right to such a place."

"She thinks so; and he thinks so. I am dead. I must remain so."

"Then—you don't love father!"

Antonia was silent a long time. "Perhaps—it is better that you think that." Then, very slowly,

very sadly: "He forgot me in one year. Twelve have passed since then."

"Forgot you! How can you say that after you have read what I gave you!"

"That was only," Antonia paused over the words, "the effect of his return here. It was natural for a few hours. "Away from here, he will forget again —just as he did before."

"You think he married again because he had forgotten you! Don't you know why he married?"

Antonia's face, turned towards the coming dawn, was touched with flickering hope; but it faded almost before it had come. She made no answer to Jeanne's repeated questions.

"He married her to save me."

Antonia turned swiftly. "To save you! I don't understand."

"I was dying. He was desperately poor. She promised to do everything to save me. He couldn't refuse."

The rush of joy in Antonia's face lasted a bare moment. She turned back to the window so that Jeanne might not see her suffering.

"If that is true—if she saved you—we owe her everything. That makes it all the more my duty now to remain—dead."

"And father?"

"It is his duty, too. Both of us must do our part —and you too. We owe her everything."

Jeanne's eyes closed wearily. She had reached the end of youthful endurance. Arguments and decisions of right and wrong had no interest for her

at this moment. Her decision had been reached. Nothing in the world could change it now.

Outside day came, not gently, not timidly, but with the splendor of flaming colors.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next day and the next, Antonia let herself drift. The moments were too fraught with complete joy to permit wracking thoughts of past or future to exist. She seized these hours like a traveler who has crossed parching deserts and sees them still stretching ahead of him and finds a moment of respite before a spring of cool, refreshing water. She drank deeply and long. She must requite herself for what had gone and what was to come. These hours were to be the perfect bit of her eternity.

She and Jeanne talked through many hours; and through as many they sat with hands clasped in the thrilling silence of complete reunion. Nothing was any longer held back; they had no secrets now, no unconfessed desires, no emotions held in check. It was only when the future, by a chance word or a wandering thought, loomed over them, that their eyes clouded. Antonia, however, mastered such moments with the strength experience had given her; and Jeanne followed unquestioningly her lead.

During the morning of their third day together, Jeanne had been left a moment alone, awaiting Antonia who had gone into a shop to buy something. Without hesitating any longer, she acted quickly on the impulse which had been stirring within her these three days. She saw this as her one chance to send her father a message. The telegraph office was just in front of her. She went in, hurriedly wrote the

message and gave it to the employee and returned to the Piazza before Antonia joined her.

"I never saw you look so well, Nini," Antonia said, sitting down on the bench beside Jeanne and holding her parasol so as to shield them both from the blazing sunlight. "I believe Capri agrees with you."

Jeanne looked away, the flush on her face deepening, the excitement in her eyes becoming more brilliant. "Isn't there some sort of theory that tells us we are at our best in the country of our birth?"

"Yes—I believe there is," Antonia answered slowly, all the time looking at Jeanne with newly awakened curiosity. "Is it the sun, dearest? You are quite rosy. If I was sure it wasn't that—I'd say it was a flush of guilt."

Jeanne turned uneasily and laughed uncertainly. "Perhaps it is guilt, Mammina."

Antonia smiled gently. "Then—confess."

"I've done something that you won't approve of —at first."

"Just now?"

"Since we've been separated these few minutes."

Antonia looked about the Piazza furtively. "You haven't seen anyone who recognized me?"

"No—not that."

"Then what?"

"Mammina—you don't quite trust me."

"Trust you, dear—what a thing to say! But— I do realize you are only eighteen. That is very young."

"Oh, dear—if I only weren't at the age when youth is always held up to me! Can't one think and act reasonably at eighteen?"

"Reasonably, yes, but not with the foresight of forty."

"Yes, with foresight too. Even more foresight, Mammina. For at forty, one looks back, at eighteen one looks forward."

"What outrageous arguments!" Then, anxiously: "Are you going to tell me what you did?"

Jeanne shook her head with quick resolution.

"You are sure it is nothing you and I shall regret?"

"I'm perfectly sure I shall not regret it."

"And I?"

"I don't believe you will, either, Mammina."

Antonia sighed slightly and rose. "Shall we wander back towards the villa now?"

The next day at luncheon Antonia asked Jeanne if she had received a letter from her father.

Jeanne started. "No. How could I? He only arrived in Paris yesterday."

"He could have telegraphed you."

"I don't expect that until he has made definite plans."

"You hardly expect him to return here?"

"He spoke of that as possible—yes."

Antonia caught a vague suggestion on Jeanne's part of wishing to avoid direct answers. "Jeanne—this is very serious. You must not keep anything you know from me. Do you think he might return without letting you know?"

"No—I'm sure he will telegraph before he arrives."

After a long pause, Jeanne reached across the

table and laid her hand on Antonia's. "Mammina—don't you want to see father again?"

Antonia's hand trembled. "That is impossible, Jeanne."

"Why?"

"Your father and I must never meet."

"But——"

"Jeanne—you must know. Do you wish to make me suffer?"

"But, Mammina—I don't understand—and I want to. I must. If you would only let me know what is in your heart. You have never really told me that. I must know how you feel. You say we must not let the future interfere with these days of happiness. I want these days of happiness to go on—forever and ever. Why shouldn't we try to make them?"

"Because, Nini—there are certain laws that God—no, not God, man—has made which we must follow. Your father thinks I am dead; the world thinks so; legally, I am. His duty is no longer to me; it is to another."

Jeanne's eyes clouded. "If you loved him—I don't believe you'd say that."

"Jeanne!"

"You don't love him, Mammina; do you?"

Antonia rose, came around the table and leaned her cheek against Jeanne's. "Dearest—promise me one thing. I shall only be here a few days longer. After that—I must go away. While I am here, let's forget problems. Let's be happy."

"But—you can't leave me, Mammina!"

"I'm not going to leave you, darling. I'm going to take you with me—for a while."

"And after that?"

Antonia closed her eyes wearily. "After that, Jeanne—I don't know. I can't think as far as that. God must help us."

"You are not thinking of father?"

"I am thinking of you—and of myself."

"He is not happy."

"Jeanne—very few of us poor mortals are. He has you. That is enough."

"Mammina—sometimes, lately, I find you—somehow—a tiny bit hard."

Antonia winced and turned away; and all the rest of that day Jeanne wandered about, listless, undecided, miserably unhappy. For the first time she had begun to question her wisdom in sending the telegram. If bringing the two beings she loved best in the world together was going to create even greater tragedy, she had best telegraph her father not to come. The problem stirred her painfully; she knew what she desired most of all and yet all her efforts appeared to be leading towards something tragic. Her mother's withheld confession meant certainty to her.

She wandered about alone during the day and evening. The next morning brought no relief from tormenting doubts. When she came out on the terrace for tea, late in the afternoon, she had almost reached the conclusion that it was her duty to send another telegram to her father and tell him to wait. Perhaps a few days more would bring some solution.

While she sat there alone, trying vainly to make up her mind, Emilia brought her a telegram—the one Hogarth had sent from Naples. He was on his way there! He would be there in two hours—perhaps sooner! She sighed with immense relief. The problem was out of her hands now; she had done what she had thought was best!

Hearing Antonia in the adjoining room, she hurriedly hid the telegram beneath the tea tray and tried to appear calm.

Antonia, with hat on and parasol unfurled, announced that she had finally mustered enough courage to attempt the walk up to Tiberio. "Will you go with me, Nini?"

Jeanne welcomed the plan; it would at least give her a little more time; and she needed it now—desperately.

"Would you mind very much, Mammina, if I did not go with you?"

Antonia showed quick surprise. "You don't feel up to it, dearest?"

"I was there with father only last week." Her eyes dwelt in Antonia's a few seconds. "He told me you preferred it to all the places in Capri."

Antonia slipped into the place beside her on the bench. "You are worried about something, Jeanne. Do you care to tell me?"

"Not just yet, Mammina."

Antonia rose, flushing slightly. She appeared on the point of saying something; then reconsidered. She said finally: "I think I can go up there and back in two hours; don't you? One to go—one to

return. Perhaps you'll walk a little way and meet me on my return."

Jeanne assented with alacrity. "Yes—when it's cooler I'll walk up as far as the Villa Wordsworth and wait for you there."

They went to the gate together and Jeanne watched Antonia disappear down the path which skirted the town; then she rushed to her room, put on a hat and looked at the clock. Still an hour before her father could possibly arrive! An hour—and in that time she must decide how best to tell him everything!

She came downstairs and stood in the cool salon, her eyes brilliant with racing thoughts. If her mother did not love her father any more—if their separation had put an end to all need of each other—if tragedy were the only outcome of their meeting——! She clasped her hands with an access of despair. Perhaps she *was* too young to understand! It had all seemed so very simple; and now there was only incredible complication.

She heard the gate bell ring and started. Could her father have already arrived! She ran to the door and looked down into the courtyard. Emilia had already opened the gate. Several women were standing there, their heads held erect with a burden of gleaming bags and trunks. In the midst stood her step-mother.

Jeanne's cry of astonishment brought Mary Hogarth's glance to her. With a wave of the hand she came up the steps.

Jeanne attempted words. They seemed to her an eternity in coming. "Is father with you?"

"No—I'm alone."

"Where is he?"

"In Paris—I suppose."

Jeanne rushed forward with outstretched, protesting hands.

"You must not come here! You must not come in this house!"

"A nice welcome you're giving me! What's the matter with you, Jeanne?"

Mary Hogarth's voice and face, beneath a rising flush of anger, showed intense fatigue. In spite of her consternation, Jeanne was aware of something unfamiliar in her appearance.

Jeanne put out her hands and touched both walls of the steps—a futile effort towards blocking the way. Mary Hogarth was coming steadily up and towards her.

"You must not come in!" Jeanne's voice broke sharply. "I—I forbid you to come in!"

"Are you crazy?"

"No—no! It is impossible!"

"And why—pray?"

"You don't know! How can I tell you?"

"You had better tell me—and at once. Hurry up."

Jeanne felt the world reeling about her. She only saw one thing clearly now—a flushed face with angry, shining eyes.

"Hurry up! I'm dead tired. What's all this foolishness about?"

Jeanne made a supreme effort to speak with steady, clear voice. "My—my mother is here!"

Mary Hogarth laughed abruptly; then she

looked keenly at the trembling girl; her voice, when she spoke, was a shade quieter. "Have you been ill, Jeanne? Are you here alone?"

"I tell you my mother is here! Oh—why don't you believe me?"

"Your mother has been dead twelve years."

"No—no—no! She did not die! She was saved! She is my teacher—Mrs. Bryce!"

Mary Hogarth leaned forward and grasped Jeanne's hands in a painful grip. "What are you trying to tell me?"

"It is true!"

"How long have you known this?"

"Only this week—since she has been here with me."

Jeanne felt herself pushed aside as Mary Hogarth hurried up the steps towards the door. Jeanne ran after her. They faced each other again in the long salon.

"Where is she?" Mary Hogarth demanded.

"She has gone out. But—she will be back soon. Please—please don't stop here!"

"Are you raving mad—or lying to me?"

"Why can't you believe me? I am only telling you the truth."

"Where is she now?"

"She went up to the Tiberio."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

Jeanne saw her draw in her breath as though she were gathering all her forces for some great task. Then she turned towards the door without a word.

Suddenly terrible certainty flashed over Jeanne.

She rushed after her and clung to her with both hands.

"You must not go up there! She will come back here! Wait here! See—I will go tell her you are here! Please—Oh!"

Jeanne felt herself grasped by both shoulders and thrown back against the wall. She tried vainly to reach a chair, missed it, and fell face downward on the tile floor. She closed her eyes with sudden pain. But unconsciousness lasted only a moment. She struggled up and made her way towards the door. Down in the courtyard Emilia was still talking to the women with trunks and bags on their heads. No one else was there.

Resolution came back with a rush. She called to Emilia. "Tell those women to take the things to the hotel." Then, not waiting for them to file out, she hurried down the steps, past them and out into the road. For a few moments, she appeared undecided; then she took the road that led to the Piazza. Her father would surely be arriving now! Better that she should find him than try alone to face—what? She shuddered and began running.

The Piazza was filled with the crowd that always gathered there in the afternoon. Jeanne hurried through the idling groups and reached the director of the funicula.

Had he seen a launch arrive?

He nodded and pointed down to the quay. A launch had just come in. The passengers would surely come up in the next car.

When would the next car come?

In fifteen minutes.

In fifteen minutes! Could she wait that long? She turned to the iron railing and looked down at the Grande Marina. She tried to make out a familiar figure. If her father did not come! But the telegram had said he was on his way. Still—if something had delayed him! She gripped the rail with a new onrush of fear.

A bell rang; the cable of the funicula began to move; the car was now on its way. Ten minutes more! Ten years! Ah—there he was! She ran to him and, without kiss or salutation, seized his arm and urged him through the crowd.

"Come quick—this way—to the Tiberio!"

Hogarth's face blanched. "What is it, Jeanne?"

She hurried on through the narrow street that led away from the Piazza. Hogarth followed, breathless with questions.

"Has your step-mother come?"

"She came less than an hour ago."

"Did she come to the villa?"

"Yes—but I would not let her come in."

"What do you mean? Tell me everything!"

"I can't tell you now. Please come as fast as you can. I am desperately afraid."

"Of what?"

"She has gone to the Tiberio."

"Why there?"

"Someone else is there."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Bryce."

Hogarth breathed easier. "Well—what of it? I don't understand!"

Jeanne paused for a moment and faced her father.

"Father—Mrs. Bryce is my mother! I've just found it out. That is why I sent the telegram. No—she did not die. She was saved. Oh—don't ask me questions! Don't look at me that way! Don't you see! When I refused to let her—my step-mother—come into the villa, she forced it from me. I told her everything. I told her where my mother was. She followed her. She is there with her now. Father——"

Her voice died away. Hogarth had not waited for further explanations. He had sprung ahead and was already tearing along the path as though life and death depended on his speed. At a turn in the path, he disappeared.

Jeanne ran after him. The path became steadily steeper. She reached the Wordsworth Villa and leaned against the wall to regain breath. The rocky, bare expanse that led up to the Tiberio stretched before her. She saw Hogarth now. He was half way up the ascent and still running. He appeared to be going with the wind—the energy of great fear carrying him along.

Jeanne started off again. The road seemed endless. She would never be able to reach the highest point. Her feet seemed weighted with lead. Half the ascent was accomplished. Again she must rest. Then a last struggle. The blood pounded in her temples; her heart pained her; she gasped for breath. A few more steps and then——

She stopped and tried to see. A mist was before her eyes. Then, very slowly, the scene unfolded—

the ruined walls of the castle, the chapel, the cross, the brink of the precipice. Then—her father, sitting on the steps beneath the cross with a figure clasped in his arms. Ah—she recognized the white dress Antonia had worn!

She came nearer. Her father was very still; his face was lowered over the one he held in his arms; his lips appeared to move and yet no sound came from them.

Still nearer—and she stopped. There was a deep cut in her mother's face. Blood was trickling from it on to her white dress. She saw her father pressing a handkerchief against the cut.

She rushed forward.

"Father—is she——"

Hogarth looked up at her as if out of a dream. He stared about in a bewildered, uncomprehending way.

"I found her there—unconscious—lying on the edge of the precipice."

"Alone?"

Hogarth nodded.

Jeanne turned quickly towards the precipice. Some dislodged stones gave evidence of struggling feet. A gap of several feet showed that a narrow ledge had recently given way and slid off into the sea—perhaps loosened by the struggling feet. A gold purse lay on the edge of the crevice. Jeanne saw it and shut her eyes. Then, with irresistible impulse, she went nearer and peered over the precipice.

"Come back!" Hogarth's voice reached her, loud

and commanding. "I have looked. There is nothing to see."

She turned back and knelt down beside her mother.

"Has she seen you yet?"

"No."

She put out her hand and clasped her father's—and together they waited for returning consciousness.